Seasonal Nordicity in Montreal Fiction: Representations of North

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Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation untersucht, wie saisonale Nordizität (d.h. ein winterlicher Zustand in einem Klima, das normalerweise keine ganzjährigen arktischen Einflüsse vorweist) in der kollektiven Vorstellung der Literatur Montreals repräsentiert wird. Der Norden ist einer der kulturellen Gründungsmythen im englischsprachigen Kanada und in Quebec, die Entwicklung der „Idee des Nordens“ (*imaginaire du Nord*) ist in den beiden Kulturen jedoch in verschiedenen historischen Begebenheiten und kulturellen Bezügen verwurzelt. Eine bedeutende Abweichung zwischen ihnen liegt darin, dass die Stadt in der Literatur Quebecs als ein Ort des Nordens angenommen wird. Diese Arbeit untersucht die Entwicklung der Idee des Nordens, die einen wesentlichen Diskurs über die Identität und Literatur im englischsprachigen Kanada und in Quebec darstellt. Die ersten drei Kapitel legen das Fundament für die anschließenden Textanalysen; in Kapitel 1 wird das Konzept „Norden“ eingeführt und die theoretischen Raumkonzepte werden erklärt. Kapitel 2 bietet sowohl einen Überblick über die kulturellen und literarischen Repräsentationen des Nordens im englischsprachigen Kanada und in Quebec als auch einen Rückblick auf die Arbeit anderer Wissenschaftler in diesem Gebiet. Die Entwicklung von Louis-Edmond Hamelins Vorstellung von Nordizität, einem quantitativen Berechnungssystem für die Nördlichkeit eines Ortes, wird ebenso erläutert wie der Begriff „saisonale Nordizität“, den ich als Sprungbrett für meine Interpretation der Stadt als eine Örtlichkeit des Nordens benutze. Die Entwicklung der städtischen Fiktion im englischsprachigen Kanada und in Quebec, insbesondere der Fokus auf die anglo- und frankophone Literatur in Montreal und die Rolle der Nordizität darin, sind das Thema des dritten Kapitels. In den folgenden drei Kapiteln wird der Textkorpus analysiert, der aus drei Romanen (*Inside* von Alix Ohlin, *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* von Pierre Szalowski, *Dogs at the Perimeter* von Madeleine Thien) und einer Kurzgeschichte (“Banana Chaudfroid” von Monique Proulx) besteht. Durch *close reading* werden Repräsentationen von Kälte, Schnee und Eis analysiert, um die Auswirkungen der saisonalen Nordizität (Winter) auf die sozialen Gewohnheiten und Räumlichkeiten in der Stadt zu bestimmen.

Abstract

This dissertation explores how seasonal nordicity (the state of winter in a climate that does not experience Arctic influences all year round) is represented in the collective imaginary of Montreal literature. The North is one of the founding myths of both English Canadian and Québécois culture, yet the development of the idea of North, or *imaginaire du Nord*, in the two cultures is rooted in different historical events and cultural references. A significant divergence between them is the acceptance of the city as a location of North in Québécois literature. This study explores the development of "the North" as an idea, a discourse central to the development of both English Canadian and Québécois identity and literature. The first three chapters lay the foundation for the text analyses which follow. In chapter 1, the North is introduced and the theoretical spatial concepts are explained. In chapter 2, a survey of cultural and literary representations of the North in English Canada and Quebec is provided, as well as a review of other scholars' previous work in this area. The development of Louis-Edmond Hamelin's notion of nordicity, a quantitative system for measuring the northernness of a place, is elucidated as well as the term "seasonal nordicity," which I use as a springboard for my interpretation of the city as a location of North. The evolution of urban fiction in English Canada and Quebec, specifically focusing on anglophone and francophone literature in Montreal and the role of nordicity therein are the subject of chapter 3. The following three chapters analyze the text corpus, three recent Montreal novels (*Inside* Alix Ohlin, *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* Pierre Szalowski, *Dogs at the Perimeter* Madeleine Thien) and one short story ("Banana Chaudfroid" Monique Proulx). Through close readings the representation of cold, snow, and ice are analyzed in order to determine the effects of seasonal nordicity (winter) on social practices and spatiality in the city.

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1 Introducing the North in the City: Explorations of Urban Winter Space

> "Cities are not simply material or lived spaces–they are also *spaces of the imagination* and *spaces of representation*. How cities are envisioned has effects. Urban designers and planners have ideas about how cities should look, function, and be lived, and these are translated into plans and built environments. Cities are represented in literary, art, and film texts, and these too have their effects. The *public imaginary* about cities is itself in part constituted by media representations as much as by lived practices. Ideas about cities are not simply formed at a conscious level; they are also a product of unconscious desires and imaginaries."
>
> Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, "City Imaginaries"
> (2002, 7; emphases added)

Cities are complex beings, formed by function, fact, and fiction. As the citation above from Bridge and Watson outlines, a city is created as much by the imagination as by steel and concrete. This project explores the spaces of imagination and representation of the dynamic city of Montreal. Specifically focusing on fictional literary texts, I analyze how the North, one of the founding myths of both English Canadian and Québécois[1] culture, is represented in the collective imaginary of Montreal. By taking note of urban design, public spaces, and the social practices of the characters in my text corpus, valuable insights into Montreal's Nordic character are revealed. As Montreal is in practice a bilingual city, in this project I compare and contrast urban fiction in both English and French.

The North has become one of Canada's defining myths and an important location for its literature. Many Canadian and Québécois writers use northern settings, symbols, and motifs as a means of demarcating their fiction as distinctly Canadian or Québécois. Perceiving Canada as "the true North strong and free" (as the well-known line from the national anthem

[1] I refer to the Canadian and Québécois cultures separately, as they are widely acknowledged as two distinct cultural nations. In 2006, the Canadian parliament passed a motion which officially declared the Québécois "a nation within a united Canada." The term Québécois, denoting the French-speaking people of Quebec, emerged in the 1960s during the Quiet Revolution, a period of social, intellectual, and political upheaval in Quebec. The term French Canadian was used prior to this era to refer to all francophone peoples of Canada. In this study, the term "Canadian" refers to English Canadian culture, literature, and people generally living outside Quebec. I discuss the complexities of anglophones living inside Quebec in chapter 3.1.1. French Canadian communities still exist outside of Quebec throughout Canada, the highest concentrations being in New Brunswick and Ontario. Exploring the literature of these communities, however, is beyond the scope of this project.

goes) is a foundational myth in the English Canadian imagination, and the intrinsic nordicity of Quebec is unquestionably a significant component of Québécois self-perception and culture (see chapter 2.2). Yet the development of the idea of North, or *imaginaire du Nord*, in the two cultures is rooted in different historical events and cultural references. A significant deviation between the literature of Quebec and English Canada is the acceptance of the city as a location of North, as discussed in chapter 2.4.

The search for a "Canadian identity" marked Canadian cultural production during the 1960s−1990s. What is it that makes Canada and Canadians unique? How do they define their identity in the face of the possible separation of the province of Quebec from the rest of Canada, as the fraught 1980s and 1990s saw two referenda in Quebec asking its people to determine if it should become an independent state?[2] Some of the popular defining myths that Canada has tried on for size have been the Staple Thesis, the Laurentian Thesis, and Survival.

In the 1920s, Canadian political economist Harold A. Innis developed the Staple Thesis, arguing that Canada is destined to remain a resource hinterland, exporting its immense natural resources (wood, water, furs, grain, minerals, oil, etc.) to more developed economies. Particularly notable is his 1930 publication *The Fur Trade in Canada* (see Innis 1999 [1930]). Innis claimed that the Staple Thesis influenced settlement patterns in Canada, as well as social and political development, to create a country permanently dependent on others. Using the Staple Thesis as a springboard, historian Donald G. Creighton's Laurentian Thesis (*The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence*, 1937, re-issue under new title, see Creighton 2002) went further in arguing that the exploitation of staple resources in Canada benefitted the major cities along the St. Lawrence River (Montreal, Toronto) in order to create a trans-Atlantic market economy. The Laurentian Thesis has been criticized since 1960 for its imperial exploitation of Canada's less populous regions to the benefit of the St. Lawrence River valley's populous urban areas (McKillop 2006). As Canadian literature emerged and was recognized as a canon independent from colonial ties to Britain in the 1960s ("CanLit"), it often took as its theme the search for identity. In 1972 Margaret Atwood published her groundbreaking *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* in which she argues that survival against the harsh elements of Canadian nature has been the central theme of Canadian literature. Atwood emphasizes the imagined nature of Canadian space, what Canadians think and feel about their land as they search to articulate an identity. Literature,

[2] The 1980 referendum resulted in a 59.56 percent vote against Quebec sovereignty-association; the 1995 referendum was won by hair's breadth again by the no side, with 50.58 percent against separation from Canada.

according to Atwood, "is also a map, a geography of the mind […] if we can learn to read it as our literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately; we need to know about here, because here is where we live" (Atwood 1972, 18–19).

It can be said that through all of these theses, the North is a common thread. The far North is a resource-rich hinterland that has been exploited to the benefit of southern Canadian cities. Indeed, all of Canada can be considered "the North," as this project argues and clarifies in chapter 2. The resources of lumber, furs, water, and grain, as mentioned in the Staple Thesis, are found even at the southernmost reaches of the Canadian territory. Throughout Canada's history, new settlers from Europe and around the world have struggled to survive in harsh winter conditions−even still today and in major metropolitan areas (see chapter 2.4.2.1). Again, this struggle is not limited to the Arctic or remote areas, but to the whole of the Canadian landscape. Composer, educator, environmentalist, and literary scholar R. Murray Shafer perceived the North "'as constituting a Canadian myth upon which the survival of the country depended'" (Wynn 2009, 13), as it was used by the Canadian government to try to foster a sense of nationalism that would unite the multiethnic population flung far and wide across the sparsely populated geography of Canada in the twentieth century (see chapter 2.3.1). Kaufman elucidates how states "instill a collective national identity in their citizenries through the promotion of national symbols and myths, and in turn, individuals' beliefs about what is important to their national identity can become codified into a collective representation of the nation" (Kaufman 2008, 467).

Motifs, symbols, and imagery of the North are frequent in Canadian literature and film. In 1974, geographer and expert in Northern Studies Louis-Edmond Hamelin claimed that "since the boreal area is 'one of the least known metaregions in the world' it has 'fuelled imaginative creation'" (qtd. in Chartier 2007b, 43). In 1983, Alison Mitcham argued that "[m]any contemporary Canadian novelists – French and English – have focused on the northern wilderness in the belief that it is what makes Canada distinctive and original […] the northern wilderness has become a dominant Canadian myth" (Mitcham 1983, 17). This project explores the development of "the North" as an idea, a discourse central to the development of both Canadian and also Québécois identity and literature, as will be elucidated in chapter 2. I trace the historical and literary roots of the idea of North and the *imaginaire du nord* in chapter 2, and use Louis-Edmond Hamelin's notion of nordicity as a springboard for my interpretation of the city as a site of North in Canada, departing from

previously held beliefs among anglophone scholars of Canadian literature that the North is somewhere "out there," in the far North and remote regions. This study thus transcends the argument that the city "only gains significance as a space with distinct characteristics when separated from rural or unsettled, 'wild' space" (Rosenthal 2011, 11) by bringing the wild, unpredictable, uncontrollable North to the southern Canadian metropolis.

1.1 Why Montreal? Why Compare Anglophone and Francophone Literature?

Montreal is a large, vibrant city unique in Canada in its (unofficial) bilingual character, and has produced a body of literature in both English and French that provides fertile ground comparing how the North and nordicity are represented. Canadian literature and culture have long been divided along linguistic lines. Today's province of Quebec, "discovered" by French explorer Jacques Cartier in 1534, was a French colony in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1642 a French mission called Ville-Marie was established in present-day Montreal. Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve was commissioned to lead a group of French colonists to establish the mission and Jeanne Mance, a nurse, founded the chapel and hospital. De Maisonneuve and Mance are today considered co-founders of the city of Montreal–a notable recognition of a woman's early pioneering work in North America. The Seven Year's War between France and Great Britain played out largely in New France; the year still fraught with political and emotional tension in Quebec is 1759, when British troops conquered the French at Quebec City's Plains of Abraham. The Conquest, as it is known in Canada, culminated in the 1763 Treaty of Paris that officially ended the Seven Year's War. Canada was given to the British in exchange for the tiny sugarcane–producing islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique. In 1760, Montreal was still a small settlement of French farmers and a military outpost. British troops soon came to inhabit Montreal as well as wealthy English businessmen who built empires on furs, beer, and railways. The city became incorporated in 1832 when its population was 40,000. Montreal has always had a French-speaking majority, except during the brief period of 1831-1866 (see Simon 2006, 221), "yet numbers have not meant cultural or economic clout" (11). Montreal rose to become the most powerful city in Canada, the epicenter of the economy as well as culture until the 1960s. William Weintraub argues that even in the 1960s, any threat from Toronto to take over Montreal's title as Canada's greatest city was "still faint and distant" (Weintraub 1996, 287–88).

This study takes Montreal as its laboratory, though research into nordicity in the literature of other Canadian cities such as Toronto, Calgary, Winnipeg, Edmonton, or St. John's would also be fascinating and worthy of examination. Montreal is in itself, however, a microcosm of Canada. Here can we truly examine how anglophones and francophones coexist in twenty-first century Canada, here we have the deeply rooted Québécois culture and language alongside recent immigrants from around the world, and the anglophone and Jewish communities that date back to the 1760s in the city.

"The North" is commonly associated with desolate Arctic landscapes devoid of trees, lonely cabins, and utter isolation. The island of Montreal, a thriving urban metropolis of 1.8 million people,[3] polyglot and multiethnic, disrupts these preconceived notions of the North. A southern Canadian city only 100 kilometers from the United States border, Montreal has winters that are long (November to April, and snow storms may still sneak up in May) and cold (temperatures frequently rest around minus 20 degrees Celsius for weeks and can dip to minus 40), and the city experiences heavy snowfall. As it lies on the same latitude as Marseille, France, on the Mediterranean, it may not be surprising that hot (30-35 degrees Celsius) and humid summers from June to August are also characteristic of Montreal's climate, yet Montreal is the city where Arctic weather conditions descend the furthest south in the world (see chapter 2.2.1 for further discussion of Quebec's unique claim to nordicity).

This study finds in Montreal, then, fertile ground for the study of representations of North in literature, and the additionally rich perspective of comparing two languages and cultures within one shared city-space. Several literary critics have taken on this vast and interdisciplinary field of study before me, although none have studied the idea of North in a comparative fashion between Canada's two principal linguistic nations. Paulette Collet inaugurated the study of the North in Québécois literature in 1965 when she analyzed 300 novels in which the theme of the winter was developed (Collet 1965). In 1968, Jack Warwick published *The Long Journey: Literary Themes of French Canada*, which studied the representation of North in French Canadian fiction, while Alison Mitcham's 1983 study *The Northern Imagination* dealt with both English and French Canadian novels comparatively. Since then, to my knowledge, there have been no comparative studies of the North in English Canadian and Québécois literature (see my own chapter in *The Palgrave Handbook of Comparative North American Literature*, entitled "The North in English Canada and

[3] Note that this was the population of the island of Montreal in the 2011 census. The population of the Census Metropolitan Area (the city of Montreal and surrounding suburbs) was estimated at 4.1 million in 2014 by Statistics Canada (2015).

Quebec," (Kannenberg 2014).[4] And none of these scholars have included writing in and about cities as part of their definition of North.

I believe comparative literature that crosses borders, whether they are internationally recognized borders or cultural ones, is always fruitful. Quebec is a distinct nation, as noted above and by the Government of Canada, it nonetheless shares close ties (economic, political, historical) with English Canada that make it interesting for comparison. Rosenthal and Eibl emphasize that in "the multilingual, multicultural contact zone of the contemporary metropolis […] comparative approaches between English Canadian and French Canadian texts become especially fruitful" (Rosenthal and Eibl 2009, 10). I assert the pertinence of comparing and contrasting these two literatures and cultures which, as mentioned above, share not only a history and political federation but also a shared physical place. Whether Quebec one day forms its own political state separate from Canada or not, Montreal will most likely remain a polyglot city. In Montreal, daily life is comparative literature as one reads the "text" that is the city itself, in all its contrasting glory. On the streets, in stores, offices, and the homes of Montreal, languages intermingle midsentence and mid-conversation. Native speakers of both English and French borrow terms from one another's vocabularies, and old historic lines of separation, such as Boulevard Saint-Laurent, or "the Main" as it is nicknamed, no longer delineate an East-West division between Montreal's francophones and anglophones. In Montreal's city center one is greeted in places of business with "Bonjour/Hi" and the client is free to proceed in their preferred language. In twenty-first century Montreal, anglophones and francophones frequently cohabitate and found families together, and no neighborhood is strictly unilingual.

The 1980s were charged with political tensions as the Constitution of Canada was created and Quebec's place in it hotly contested. In her 2006 *Translating Montreal: Episodes in the Life of a Divided City,* Sherry Simon explains that many of the perceptions in her book

> are the product of the 1980s, when the discrepancy between (national) ideology and (urban) daily life in Montreal became evident. Many Montrealers came to realize that the official voices of Montreal's historic communities no longer reflected the reality on the ground, as these communities became more diverse and less easy to define according to strict linguistic or ethnic categories. Neither the positions of the

[4] Sherrill Grace's *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001) is a very ambitious study of Canadian art, drama, and fiction, including Inuit writing. Although she does mention some Quebec literature, films, etc., her book takes a decidedly English Canadian nationalist stance and does not do a comparative analysis of the two nations, but rather subsumes Québécois cultural productions under the heading Canadian.

> francophone nationalists nor the anglophone opposition reflected the everyday life of Montreal. (Simon 2006)

As cultures and languages in the contact zone that is Montreal rub shoulders daily, fragments chip off and intersect (see chapter 3.3.1 for further definition and discussion of Montreal as a contact zone). Philip Stratford, literary critic, poet, translator, and professor, in his 1986 comparative study of a dozen "Canadian" novels, six in French and six in English, stated his hypothesis on comparative literature thus: "by bringing the best works of our best authors into a common focus we can learn more about them, different things, than when they were studied in isolation or in their own families" (Stratford 1986, 1). Stratford agreed with the "pretty commonly accepted" supposition "that there are two distinct literatures in Canada" and that in the 1980s there was a growing bilingual reading public as well as more translations enabling more people to be familiar with both literatures. Such readers "who have some knowledge of the other culture" (1) would be his best audience. Thirty years on, my goals echo Stratford's: If this project "stimulate[s] interest in the other literature, one of my main objectives will have been reached; if they act reflexively and throw light back on the home culture, another aim will have been satisfied; if they demonstrate also that this kind of comparative analysis is a fruitful literary procedure, I will be fully gratified" (1). This is both my aim and joy, to foster understanding and curiosity between English Canadian and Québécois literature, specifically how the North and nordicity play such an important role in both cultures' development and expression. Stratford emphasized that "parallels that might be drawn between the two Canadian literatures mean not sameness but qualified similarity" (3).[5] Thus I have chosen Montreal as my laboratory in order to compare the two literatures. I will now introduce *the* fundamental thinker with respect to the Canadian North, who created and established the terms "nordicity" and "seasonal nordicity," so vital to the present study, and sketch his impact on the study of the North all over the world.

1.2 The Creation of Nordicity: Louis-Edmond Hamelin ô Contribution to Circumpolar Research

Louis-Edmond Hamelin, a Québécois geographer, linguist, and professor at Université Laval, has had a profound impact on the study of "the North" in the circumpolar world, and also on the present study. Born in 1923 in Saint-Didace, Quebec, Hamelin grew up observing the

[5] See also chapter 3.3 for a further discussion of the views I share with Stratford concerning comparative English Canadian and Québécois literature.

harsh winters in Quebec's St. Lawrence River Valley where winter brings "altered transportation, differentiated sociability, extreme luminosity" (Chartier 2014, 12; my translation). He went on to study in Grenoble, France, thus observing the climatic similarities between the high mountains (altitude) and winter in cold countries (latitude). Later, he traveled to the Arctic and thus his understanding of the term he coined in 1965, nordicity, comprises these three concepts: the winter, the high mountains, and the Arctic. Hamelin developed his northern thinking from the starting point of winter,[6] which he calls "seasonal nordicity" (during a certain period of the year, we find conditions similar to those of the Arctic in a territory situated further South; this concept will be further explained in chapter 2.2.1).

As a lover of winter, Hamelin is particularly troubled by some attitudes among Québécois that try to deny or escape winter. "Winter is not a fantasy; it is a reality, an object, which is there in a recurring manner every year" (Chartier and Désy 2014, 36; my translation). Hamelin argues that to accept winter allows one to be anchored in the real world:

> 'It is to accept Quebecness.' The first step is to no longer consider this season as just a physical phenomenon, but rather by its practices − social, cultural, athletic, psychological − the adaptations that it causes, the behaviors, discourses, representations, and policies that result from it. Winter touches several disciplines and it must be observed from a multidisciplinary perspective. (Chartier 2014, 13; my translation)

This is reminiscent of a similar sentiment of acceptance of Canada's cold climate expressed by a champion of the North in Canadian culture, Margaret Atwood, who wrote in *Survival* in 1972: "Nature is a monster, perhaps, only if you come to it with unreal expectations or fight its conditions rather than accepting them and learning to live with them. Snow isn't necessarily something you die in or hate. You can also make houses in it" (66).

Louis-Edmond Hamelin changed the voice of Northern research around the world. He altered the terrain by creating new words, and new meanings for some old words, such as Nordic. Hamelin has expanded the vocabulary we have in French, and in English, to describe and to more fully understand the North. As a child growing up with Quebec's cold winters,

[6] Hamelin defines winter as a "cold and snowy period of the air-earth-water interface, variable according to the weather, physical terrain, the year, the attitudes of people, and technical levels" or more simply as the "socio-climatic period that is the most dissimilar of the year" (Hamelin 1996, 221; my translation).

Hamelin realized the limitations of the French language to describe the reality in which he lived:

> My father woke me up at seven o'clock, taking the little dictionary *Larousse* and asked me to look for words, his words of course, not the words of great literature. One morning, he made me look for the word "*rang*."[7] Anyone can verify: there is no word "*rang*" in this sense in the *Petit Larousse* of 1935. My father then said to me: "Ok, look for '*chemin de rang*.'"[8] The "*rang*," "*le chemin de rang*,"[9] and "*la route*"[10] are three very different things. I looked for "*chemin de rang*," which was also absent from the dictionary. So then my father said, "How is it that these words aren't there? They are French words, not English words! Our family notary writes them. And there's the parish priest, he does the '*messe de rang*'."[11] For my father, the word existed because the educated people, such as land surveyors and the doctor, used the word "*rang*." This question stayed with me over the years, and maybe, in a subconscious way, I threw myself into the adventure of words to make some belated comments on these fundamental questions. (Chartier 2014, 5; my translation)

Thus Hamelin created the term nordicity, more elaborately defined and explained in chapter 2.1.1. He also redefined the word "Nordic" to henceforth signify circumpolar and not just Scandinavian, thus it now includes Canada and Quebec (Chartier 2014, 19).[12] When Hamelin founded the *Centre d'études nordiques* at Université Laval in 1961, "he wanted this centre to be identified as 'Nordic' in the sense that he intended to defend this term: no longer merely 'Arctic,' nor simply 'Scandinavian,' but really and truly dedicated to an object with supple borders, delimited by that which one could posit as the *cold world* and in which Quebec would have its full place" (Chartier 2014, 3; my translation). Although mainstream English dictionaries have not adapted Hamelin's definition of Nordic, I will use the word in his sense throughout this study, to signify the northernness of Quebec's and Canada's people and places.

[7] A rural concession or "line," a term originally used for a rural road perpendicular to agricultural lots in the Québec seigneurial system (my translation).
[8] A back road in a rural village, not as wide as the main road in the village and not usually paved (my translation).
[9] First line (my translation).
[10] The main road in a rural area; a secondary highway (my translation).
[11] Mass for the concession (my translation).
[12] "The word 'Nordic' comes from this: I traveled the world to create a word broad enough so that Quebec could have its place within it" (Chartier and Désy 2014, 39; my translation).

I delimit the field of Northern research as the imagined North, as do Hamelin and Chartier:

> Understood as a discursive construct marked by a radical simplification of its components–far, white and cold–the North, or rather the 'Idea of North,' reveals rich breadth and complexity which commands thorough pluricultural (between European, North-American and Native discourses; between the different Nordic territories; between the real and imagined realms) and interdisciplinary (considering the different components involved, ranging broadly from media culture to the literary field, including heritage sites, definitions of identity, post-colonial and environmental concerns) attention. […] They are of capital importance in the definition of Arctic and the North: a 'cultural' and 'discursive' field rarely considered until now by other disciplines (geology, ethnology, natural sciences, etc.) having studied these same territories. (Chartier 2007a, 14)

This brief introduction to the study of the North and creation of nordicity is expanded upon in chapter 2 of this study. Next, I will introduce some key terms and concepts necessary for exploring the spatial relationship between the North and the city.

1.3 The Spatial Turn in Literary Studies: Key Concepts for Seasonal NordiCity[13]

Literary scholars have been appropriating and adapting spatial theories from geographers, urbanists, and sociologists for several decades, leading to widespread theories and analyses of space and place as it is represented in literature. The spatial turn that has occurred in the humanities and social sciences since the 1960s has involved "reworking of the very notion and significance of spatiality to offer a perspective in which space is every bit as important as time." Warf and Arias remind us that "[g]eography matters […] because *where* things happen is critical to knowing *how* and *why* they happen" (Warf and Arias 2009, 1). In this sub-chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the development of spatial theories relevant for this study of representations of winter in the city. Definitions of space, place, walking the city, flâneur, and heterotopia will be elucidated in reference to how they will be applied to my text corpus in the following chapters.

[13] I borrow the term NordiCity from Hetel 2008.

This study of representations of North in twenty-first century Montreal fiction has been influenced and enriched by several concepts of spatiality. My use of the term spatiality follows many other literary and cultural critics in understanding space as not inherently given but rather as produced by social practices, based on the seminal works of Henri Lefebvre (*La Production de l'espace*, 1974, see English version 1991) and Michel Foucault ("Of Other Spaces," 1986). Space has acquired many properties as a result of the spatial turn.[14] Just as Hamelin and Chartier have defined the North as both a real and imagined space, other scholars have wrestled with the complexities of space. Boundaries between "real" and "imaginary" space have collapsed; literary and cultural studies have tended in two directions: one focused on actual places (of proper nouns) and the other on a 'type' of space: the city, the factory, the home. "Far from the traditional, Cartesian notion of space as a set of physical places, contemporary thought throughout the social sciences and humanities reveals it as a variegated, complex, often bewildering series of different types of locations: physical, mythological, symbolic, imagined, linguistic, cartographic, perceptual, and representational" (Warf and Arias 2009, 9–10). This is what makes spatial theories so interesting and relevant for the present study: the North is exactly such a nexus of geographic, imagined, felt, experienced, and represented space.

In 1984, Foucault declared space to be more important than time in the twentieth century, and by the mid-1980s, "[g]eography was being reimagined as not simply about fixed, abstractable spatial rules, but as a discipline that would more decisively take in the social and imaginary elements of space" (Gilbert 2009, 102). In the 1980s, David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre put forward Marxist readings of space, understanding it to be "dynamically produced and 'always already' imbued with meaning" (Gilbert 2009, 103). Space is no longer seen as "innocent" (see Rosenthal 2011, 50) but as alive and changeable. Edward Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989) emphasized that in postmodernity, the late twentieth century and onwards, "history (time and narrative) is destabilized, it is space that comes to be the arena in which meaning is created" (Gilbert 2009, 103). Most theorists agree that there are two types of space: physical space and social space.

Doreen Massey is widely acknowledged as the most influential scholar in the field that combines space, gender, and space/time in literary studies, "a concept which recognizes that human understandings of space are also locked in temporal experiences" (Gilbert 2009, 104). In her seminal work *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), Massey points out the polarization in

[14] For a helpful overview of the spatial turn in English literature, see Gilbert 2009.

Western thought and culture of time as masculine (history, progress, politics, civilization) and the opposite of these, "space, being absence or lack as feminine" (Massey 1994, 6). Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (the original French version published in 1974), first published in English translation in 1991, famously divides social space into three categories: perceived space (spatial practices), conceived space (representations of space), and lived space (representational space).

Urban geographer Edward Soja's conception of spatiality has influenced my thinking, as for him "spatiality has long been synonymous with the urban" (Warf and Arias 2009, 7). The city is the best testing ground for scholars to examine how culture and literature interacts with space, as the city is at the heart of cultural production, political movements and decision making, and social interaction. Gilbert explains: "it is the urban space which is the site, *par excellence*, of literary and cultural analyses of space in Western modernity" (Gilbert 2009, 105; see chapter 3.1.1 for a discussion of the modernist city versus postmodern and postpostmodern urban fiction).

Space is a wonderfully interdisciplinary concept, a means of traversing academic borders and bringing scholars of different disciplines into contact with one another, thus resulting in more fruitful scholarship and providing fertile ground for innovation (Warf and Arias 2009, 2). In their interdisciplinary look into *The Spatial Turn*, Warf and Arias elaborate how space is fundamentally important to all of life:

> the insistence that no social or cultural phenomenon can be torn from its spatial context, that geography is not some subordinate afterthought to history in the construction of social life, that no meaningful understanding of how human beings produce and reproduce their worlds can be achieved without invoking a sense that the social, the temporal, the intellectual, and the personal are inescapably always and everywhere also the spatial. (Warf and Arias 2009, 7)

As is evident in this study focusing on the location of North in the city, "'space matters' […] because *where* events unfold is integral to *how* they take shape" (Warf and Arias 2009, 10). One aim of my project is to explore how nordicity affects the city space and the characters that inhabit it. "Space is not simply a passive reflection of social and cultural trends, but an active participant" (Warf and Arias 2009, 10). Gilbert expresses clearly the approach of literary scholars when analyzing the spatial representations in fiction: "Literary studies are interested not only in how literature reflects such understandings of space−how they operate

thematically and at the level of plot and setting−but also in how literature shapes the understanding of space, how it intervenes in culture to produce new understandings" (Gilbert 2009, 105). A telling example of this is discussed below in chapter 3.3.3, with Claude Jasmin's novel *La Petite patrie* (1982).

1.3.1 Place

There have been myriad, and often confusing, discussions of the differences between the abstract terms "space" and "place." Merrifield articulates Lefebvre's position on place more simply: "place is not merely abstract space, it is the terrain where basic social practices−consumption, enjoyment, tradition, self-identification, solidarity, social support and social reproduction, etc.−are lived out [...] place is where everyday life is *situated*. And as such, place can be taken as *practiced space*" (Merrifield 1993, 522). Place, then, is where real life takes place, a space that is named, and put into practice. "Place−the particularities of a named space experienced as unified, with clear boundaries, characteristics and a history−was often asserted as charged with meaning against the abstraction of modern space. Place could be claimed as home, as related to the construction of identity and values" (Gilbert 2009, 103). Rosenthal concludes: "Simply put, a place is a particular space, specified by the articulation of a particular memory and identity and by lived experience" (Rosenthal 2011, 38).

Places have proper names, such as "Montreal," whereas spaces are more abstract, as in "the North," and combine both physical geography and imagined space. "On one level, the term 'place' ('lieu' in French), will be taken to mean locality, a place which can be named and located on a map. […] Traditional cultural geography has taken the view that particular places have their own unique spirit, implied in the term 'a sense of place'" (Chapman 2000, 17). The Mile End neighborhood of Montreal, for example, has a distinct sense of place.[15] Today, it is known for its eclectic, hipster lifestyle, where 20- and 30-somethings congregate in cafés and work as artists, designers, architects, writers, researchers, and other creative class professions. At the same time, they rub shoulders with Orthodox Hasidic Jews, who have long since staked their claim in the neighborhood, as well as families of young children, and remnants of the neighborhood's Greek and Italian working class past. English, French, and Yiddish intermingle on the sidewalks of this dynamic neighborhood tucked up against the eastern flank of Mount Royal. Mile End, indeed, emits a distinct "sense of place."

[15] Mile End is mentioned in several of the novels in this study, and features prominently in Monique Proulx's *Ce qu'il reste de moi* (2015), see chapter 5.4.

Feminist and Marxist philosophers have critiqued ideas of place "as nostalgic mystifications of inequality and essentialism" (Gilbert 2009, 103). Doreen Massey argues that space and place cannot be simply opposed, as Harvey asserted. Massey responds that "it is more helpful to think of places 'not so much as bounded areas as open and porous networks of social relations'" (104). Massey argues that a place "is always temporary, always constructed and changed by the subjects inhabiting it, and that it can best be understood as a particular moment in and a particular articulation of space" (Rosenthal 2011, 38). We see this in the Mile End example: currently an educated hipster hotbed, in the days portrayed in Mordecai Richler's novels (the 1930s and 40s, especially *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, 1959), Mile End was a working class Jewish, Greek, and Portuguese neighborhood. Mile End has been home to successive waves of immigration and has evolved throughout the twentieth century. Thus the name Mile End conjured up an entirely different set of connotations depending on the particular moment in its history. We can conclude that it is the people that really matter in a place. I would argue that space only matters because of the people who inhabit it. Place is *social* and thus not about abstract ideas and theories but about people and their everyday, lived experiences, as the writers in my text corpus demonstrate. The difference between place and space can be summarized thus: Place is charged with meaning; space is abstract. Rosenthal goes on to call the (Far) North a "placeless space" in Canadian literature, "a projection space for southern Canadian fantasies" (Rosenthal 2011, 21). I argue that by bringing the North to the southern city, it becomes a placed space, integrally involved in Canada's lived, everyday urban places (as I write in 3.2).

In this study, I examine how Montreal writers explore the relationships between people and their place in the city, within the larger context of the space of Montreal as a site of North. I investigate which places in the city the writers in my novels focus on: the café, the home, the street? Are the places that their characters inhabit places of historical or national significance? What does place tell us about twenty-first century Montreal fiction? Are there differences between which places francophone and anglophone authors use? And how do these places relate to NordiCity, the North in the city? Do the characters stay indoors, hiding from the elements of Montreal winters? Or do they embrace the cold, outdoor winter space? In the following sub-chapter I explore how by walking the city, people make the city come alive and make space their own: "we change the urban text by using it on our daily walks" (Rosenthal 2011, 65).

1.3.2 Walking the City

Since the 1970s, English-speaking readers have rediscovered Walter Benjamin's writings on the arcades of nineteenth century Paris and the role of the flâneur, inspired by Baudelaire, as a central figure of modernity. The French verb *flâner* means to stroll, to lounge about; a *flâneur* is literally a "stroller," someone who idles or rambles. "Perhaps the most celebrated pattern of behavior in the late 19th century literary description of urban culture is that of the flâneur - the independent yet impecunious young man, an artist or writer, who wanders the streets and cafés, dreaming, desiring, devouring the city with a cynical yearning hunger" (Zukin 1995, 188). A key figure of modernist city fiction, the male flâneur observes the city "at once part of the crowd and a detached chronicler […] He is a male libertine who, on his walks and strolls through the city, reads the urban text and aesthetically transforms and translates it into an artistic vision" (Rosenthal 2011, 65). The flâneur is a white, middle to upper class man, who consumes through his eyes, his gaze. He is in but not of the crowd, and prizes this anonymity (Gilbert 2009, 107). In modernist texts, the flâneur became "an authoritative figure for reading the city" (Rosenthal/Eibl 2009, 19).

The novels in my text corpus are not, however, modernist, as I discuss in chapter 3.1.1. In the novels studied in the subsequent chapters, the motif of walking the city (see de Certeau 2007) is common, rather than *flâneurie* (Walter Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire). In 1974 de Certeau showed how "the experience of following itineraries within the urban space, was a process of reading, perhaps even of writing, and the city's urbanity is often portrayed as a complex text which one either masters or finds overwhelming and illegible" (Gilbert 2009, 107). De Certeau expresses how the everyday practices help immigrants to make the city their own, see chapter 6. When we consume something we produce something; this is what de Certeau called second order production, that is, by walking through the city we create the city with our own itinerary, our own movements. "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered […] it is a process of *appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian […]; it is a spatial acting-out of the place […]; and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements" (Certeau 2011 [1984], 97–98). Literature does not just mirror what is going on in a city but actually contributes to actively changing the city (see mention of the novel *La Petite patrie* in chapter 3.3.3, which went on to change the name of one of Montreal's boroughs).

Traditionally in Montreal fiction, crosstown travels went from east to west or west to east, crossing Montreal's English and French boundary in the center of the city at Boulevard St. Laurent. Sherry Simon explains that the walkers often took the popular "east-west axis of Sherbrooke Street or Sainte-Catherine–and the direction of the walk often indicates the emotional temperature. […] The crosstown excursion regularly appears in Montreal novels, memoirs, and poetry, usually as an incident, occasionally as the central narrative frame" (Simon 2006, 4). Notably, in my text corpus of recent Montreal fiction, characters also take exploratory walks through the city, but these are much more often on a north-south axis, and the symbolism of traveling North is significant.[16] "City streets are a mirror of the inner divisions that define modern consciousness. To stroll through the city is to know the combination of familiarity and strangeness, the *elsewhere within*, that is the modern condition" (Simon 2006, 6; emphasis in original). I posit here that twenty-first century Montreal fiction is no longer preoccupied with translation and multilingualism, as Simon argued in 2006. The Montreal fiction in my text corpus uses the motif of walking the city still to explore and "test the boundaries of the self," but without taking primary notice of politics, language, or cultural groups. Rather, the characters in these novels are preoccupied by their own inner turmoil, often recovering from trauma (see chapter 6.3). They notice details such as snow covered stairways, icy sidewalks, the blue television screens they see through windows, and other markers of nordicity. The North in the city is significant here as the sojourners partake of the cold air and white canvas of Montreal in winter to delve the depths of themselves.

Celebrated urbanist Jane Jacobs wrote in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, "Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs. Think of a city and what comes to mind? Its streets. If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull" (Jacobs 1992 [1961], 29). Danish architect and urban design consultant Jan Gehl has dedicated his career to making "cities for people," that is, urging municipal governments to re-design their cities around their people's needs and desires, not the car. Gehl's main aim is to increase foot and bicycle traffic, designing public spaces conducive to people actually going out, using, and enjoying public spaces together. By carefully observing how people use public spaces, he has helped cities

[16] Montreal's north, south, east, and west grid-like streets are actually skewed on an angle. "The 1792 proclamation establishing the division of Montreal into east and west sets Montreal's geography at an angle to the true cardinal points. In Montreal, the 'sun rises in the south' (Nepveu 1989, 7), daily pointing signs in the wrong direction, sustaining a sense of disorientation that extends to Language. The city fosters uncertainty" (Simon 2006, xv).

such as Copenhagen, London, New York, Melbourne, and Christchurch to create vibrant car-free zones, redesigning them to be used in the ways that people like best. He called his 1971 book (originally published in Danish) *Life Between Buildings*, explaining: "Life between buildings is not merely pedestrian traffic or recreational or social activities. Life between buildings comprises the entire spectrum of activities, which combine to make communal spaces in cities and residential areas meaningful and attractive" (Gehl 2006, 14). In this project, I take note of which public spaces are used and enjoyed by the characters of my text corpus, specifically in winter. How do these characters interact with Nordic winter spaces? Are indoor public spaces prioritized? Are they essentially positive spaces because they are heated, as one might assume? Or are other dynamics at play privileging an engagement with the cold, outdoor public spaces? That is, how does winter life between buildings go on in Montreal, a city no stranger to extreme cold? Some of these public spaces are heterotopias, defined and explained below.

1.3.3 Heterotopia

The term heterotopia, made popular among urbanists and cultural and literary critics by Michel Foucault, is important for the analysis of several novels in this study. Foucault's lecture "*Les espaces autres*" ("Of other spaces"), first given on March 14, 1967 for a group of architects, was released into the public domain for the Internationale Bau-Austellung Berlin in 1984, the theme of which was the renovation and reunification of Berlin. "Heterotopias, like museums, cultural centres, libraries and media centres, have been the ultimate levers for urban renewal ever since" (Cauter and Dehaene 2008, 13). Although the lecture has been criticized for being vague and disjointed, it must be kept in mind that it was originally "based on a radio talk as well as the atmosphere of fantasy" (13) and was only approved, unedited, for publication by Foucault shortly before his death.[17]

Heterotopias are, as opposed to utopias, "real places […] which are something like counter-sites" in which "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1986, 3). Foucault explains how heterotopias are the opposite of utopias in the concrete example of the mirror:

[17] Several English translations of the French original "Des espaces autres" exist (see Cauter and Dehaene 2008, 14). I cite from the translation by Jay Miskowiec, which appeared in *Diacritics* and is available online (Foucault 1986). The translation by De Cauter and Dehaene provides an interesting comparison, in which they have tried to "make Foucault's voice and style of thinking audible" and to "translate as literally as possible," giving the English "a French flavor" (Cauter and Dehaene 2008, 14). They also provide useful context by introducing Foucault's text, as well as in their notes on the text.

> Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. […] But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. […] The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (Foucault 1986, 4)

Foucault provides a "heterotopology" of six principles by which to describe and define heterotopias in a somewhat systematic way. The first principle is that every culture in the world has heterotopias but that they take varied forms which can be classed into two main categories: crisis heterotopias and heterotopias of deviation. In "more primitive societies," Foucault includes the Western world up until the mid-twentieth century, crisis heterotopias "are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis" (Foucault 1986, 4), such as menstruating women or adolescents demonstrating their first signs of sexual virility. Foucault cites early twentieth century locations such as the boarding school, military service, or the honeymoon trip[18] heterotopias of crisis. Foucault argues that these heterotopias of crisis are being replaced by a second category, heterotopias of deviation, which are places "in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" (Foucault 1986, 5), such as retirement homes, prisons, and psychiatric hospitals.[19] Several of the novels in my text corpus feature heterotopias of crisis and deviation, as will be examined in chapters 4.3.1 and 5.4.

[18] For example, on a honeymoon trip "The young woman's deflowering could take place 'nowhere' and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers" (Foucault 1986, 5).

[19] Foucault argues that retirement homes are "on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation" (Foucault 1986, 5).

Foucault's second principle states that over time a society "can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion" (Foucault 1986, 5) citing the evolving use and placement of cemeteries from the city centers to the outskirts of cities. The third principle claims that a heterotopia is "capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1986, 6), such as the fantasy and escapism provided by the theater, cinema, or botanical garden (this type of heterotopia is especially important to my analysis of Alix Ohlin's *Inside* in Chapter 4.) In his fourth principle, Foucault introduces "heterochronies", heterotopias linked to "slices in time" (Foucault 1986, 6), citing the museum and the library as sites where time is infinitely accumulated in an attempt to "enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes" (Foucault 1986, 7). On the other hand, there are heterotopias which are transitory and definitely limited to a slice of time, such as the festival or fair located on the outskirts of cities.

Foucault states in his fifth principle that "Heterotopias *always* presupposed a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place" (Foucault 1986, 7). One is either forced to enter (i.e. a prison or psychiatric institution) or one must perform certain rites and rituals to enter (i.e. religious sites, hygienic purification sites like a Scandinavian spa), or pay an entrance fee in order to enter a botanical garden, theatre, or cinema. Shopping malls, the twenty-first century urban heterotopia *par excellence*, seem at first to be public places, however they are policed by private security guards who can demand anyone to leave based on their appearance or behavior (or suspected deviant behavior), such as groups of rowdy teenagers or homeless persons. "In the heterotopian world of the shopping mall, there is social homogeneity and social order. Private security services make sure that 'undesirables' are escorted out of the mall, protecting those deemed worthy through their behavior and their appearance from having to encounter those portions of society that may be disturbing" (Kern 2008, 106). This distinction, in my view, classifies the public city parks of *Inside* as *not* being heterotopias, as there is no restriction to who may enter, imposed either by standard of dress, behavior, or entrance fee. Yet public parks are places where deviant behavior is often overlooked or tolerated, such as the naked lovers copulating on Montreal's Mount Royal, or where unlawful behavior can be hidden (see discussion in chapter 4.3.1).[20]

[20] Note that Andrea Strolz refers to Toronto's parks in the novels of Margaret Atwood as heterotopias because they function as counter-sites (Strolz 2009, 66). I agree that the parks in my text corpus are counter-sites where

The sixth principle, or trait, of heterotopias is "that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains," between two extremes, either to create a "space of illusion that exposes every real space" (heterotopias of illusion, i.e. brothels or strip clubs) or "on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy" (heterotopias of compensation, i.e. Puritan societies) (Foucault 1986, 8). A contemporary example of a heterotopia of compensation is the online world of Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest, in which individuals present a (usually) perfected, edited version of their lives portraying themselves to their best advantage.

Caroline Rosenthal argues that today, in large, multicultural urban centers the entire city should be seen as a heterotopic space:

> Heterotopia has become an extended concept, employed by urban and cultural critics to describe the coexistence of multiple sites (and the cultural groups inhabiting them) within urban space. […] present-day urban spaces must in general be regarded as heterotopic, because they function as temporary nodes in a network of transitory movements and migrations. As such they constitute counter-images to modernity that challenge modern conceptions of cultural and spatial identity and of community (and of nation, one could add). (Rosenthal 2011, 52)

This is clearly true of Montreal, a nexus of transportation and mixing of cultural groups, as each tries to establish their own cultural identity in the city-space. These concepts of spatiality, place, walking the city, and heterotopia will reappear throughout the close readings of my text corpus in chapters 4 through 6, as I examine how seasonal nordicity has an impact on the spatiality of the narratives. In the next sub-chapter, I will provide a roadmap of what is found in the remainder of this study and introduce my text corpus.

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deviant or rejuvenating behavior occurs as a counter-balance to everyday life. I debate assigning the name heterotopia to them, as there are no systems of opening or closing in these parks. The gates or fences that surround some Montreal public parks are never locked, although some bear signs claiming they are open from April to November (i.e. not when the ground is permanently frozen) and/or are closed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Some parks have no fences or gates, and in any case these "rules" are never enforced unless a neighbor was to complain about someone causing excess noise in a park. Mount Royal, the 200 hectare park in the middle of the city, the wildest space in the city and often featured in Montreal fiction, would be comparable to the ravines of Toronto. "The mountain," as it is called by locals, is discussed in chapters 4 and 6.

1.4 Roadmap of Seasonal Nordicity: Principles of Text Selection

As a means of delimiting the field of research, this study takes recent Montreal fiction written in English and French under its lens. The three novels in my text corpus are recently published and thus on the cusp of the development of Montreal fiction, and the current representations of North in Montreal literature. Only Monique Proulx's short story "Banana Chaudfroid" (1999) is added and breaks from this pattern, being the only short fiction that I analyze in detail. However, as the story about the 1998 Montreal Ice Storm was republished in its entirety (for the first time in French) in Proulx's 2015 novel *Ce qu'il reste de moi*, it can be argued that both the subject matter and story itself are still intensely relevant. Aboriginal or Inuit fictional representations of North, though of great value, are beyond the scope of the present study that seeks to analyze the southern view of North in the metropolis as perpetuated in the dominant settler cultures of English Canada and Quebec.

In chapter 2, I lay the foundation for understanding what and where is "North," fundamental for the rest of the study. I discuss different perceptions of North and how scholars of Canadian literature have used and defined it in the past. Hamelin's nordicity index is explained in more detail and the subsequent understanding of North as a discursive system and not just a quantifiable geographical location. The historical and cultural development of the Québécois *imaginaire du nord* is then examined as well as Quebec's special claim to nordicity. Next, the English Canadian "Idea of North" is traced through history as the Canadian government used it to foster national unity. I subsequently define seasonal nordicity, that is, winter occurring in places that do not experience Arctic influences all year round, as the means of including large urban areas in the definition of "the North." This concept is common and accepted in Québécois literary scholarship but as of yet unknown in the English Canadian literary academy. I conclude chapter 2 by comparing and contrasting the two cultural nations' "ideas of North" and find that they have developed parallel to each other, rather than providing one uniting myth.

After introducing the North in the city in chapter 2, the following chapter goes farther in considering urban fiction in English Canada and Quebec. I define first of all the differences between city fiction and urban fiction (and why I use the latter term) as well as a discussion of the definition of "urban areas" in Canada and the oft-cited statistic that Canada is 80 percent urbanized. Next, I give a literary-historical overview of why urban fiction was so slow to develop in English Canadian literature, which had a long love affair with the wilderness and the small town as the site of its identity. Then, I return to Québécois urban fiction which

developed earlier, in the 1940s. Chapter 3 includes a lengthy explanation of the debate around different terms for "anglo-québécois fiction," that is, how to classify writing in English coming from Quebec. This conversation is important as two of the authors in my text corpus write their work in English. This chapter also gives an overview of important writers of Montreal fiction, in both English and French since the 1940s, highlighting how seasonal nordicity is represented in specific texts.

Alix Ohlin's *Inside* (2012a), the focus of chapter 4, is a tapestry of three narratives and time periods centered in Montreal, exploring the inner worlds of flawed and complex characters whose lives intersect over the years. Cold is a central trope of the novel, used in characterization and theme. In this chapter, traditional representations of cold in literature are examined, which Ohlin's novel at times perpetuates and also debunks. In Montreal's cold outdoor parks new relationships are formed and new ideas spring to life. Heterotopias, introduced above, are defined and discussed in detail as they play an important role in Ohlin's narrative. Likewise, anglophone spaces in Montreal, as well as the colors of cold are subsequently examined.

The Ice Storm of 1998 is investigated in chapter 5, the only chapter in this study to compare two fictional texts: Monique Proulx's 1999 short story "Banana Chaudfroid" and Pierre Szalowski's *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* (2007). First, the facts of the Ice Storm and the definition of collective trauma are introduced as well as a discussion of the terminology "natural disaster." Cold also plays a significant role in Szalowski's novel, as it is featured in the title and drives a disparate band of neighbors together during the crisis, whereas in "Banana Chaudfroid" a single woman living alone uncharacteristically takes in a family of strangers from an emergency shelter. Next, I compare how television is used to mediate the disaster in both fictional texts. Proulx's short story takes a much more serious tone than does Szalowski's novel, as it uncovers social inequalities in Montreal revealed by the Ice Storm. The city of Montreal becomes a heterotopia during the Ice Storm, as the entire city-space becomes an eerie mirror of normal life.

Chapter 6 takes up Madeleine Thien's beautiful *Dogs at the Perimeter* from 2011. At first glance perhaps an unconventional choice for a study of nordicity in Montreal fiction, Thien's novel is set primarily in the tropics of Cambodia during the horrific genocide in the 1970s. A large portion of the novel, however, juxtaposes the protagonist Janie's past with her present-day life in a Montreal winter, a striking contrast, and a suitable choice for a multicultural city. The cold and colorlessness of Montreal are woven throughout the narrative

as markers of difference from the lush foliage and bloody brutality of Cambodia. Trauma and memory are major themes in Thien's novel as she seeks to bear witness to the suffering of survivors of this little-known genocide. Many Cambodian refugees live today in Montreal, and this novel tells their story. Windows are used here as an important symbol, a barrier between Janie and the cold outside. Janie struggles to carry the weight of her deceased family's legacy, but it starts to destroy her own relationship with her son and husband in Montreal. She walks the Nordic city in an effort to let the memories run their course and somehow bring her a way forward.

In the final chapter, I draw conclusions by comparing and contrasting all of the novels in my text corpus and determining the essence of representations of seasonal nordicity in Montreal fiction today.

2 Ideas of North

In the opening paragraph of chapter seven of his 1997 book *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History*, Daniel Francis refers to and perpetuates numerous associations with the North which will be discussed and deconstructed in this chapter.

> To a Canadian, North is more than a point on the compass. It is a region, a territory, a vast intimidating part of the country somewhere beyond easy comfort. Officially, the North extends from the 60th parallel of latitude all the way to the Pole: the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, the Arctic archipelago. Unofficially, it occupies our imagination, filling it with dreams of high adventure and fabulous wealth. To a Canadian, North is an idea, not a location; a myth, a promise, a destiny. (Francis 1997, 152)

Indeed, North is more than a direction, and its geographic location is constantly shifting based on where one is personally located. One must be "aware always that 'north' can never be a sole or simple descriptor: there have always been as many norths as there have been standpoints from which to look northwards" (Davidson 2005, 21). I capitalize the term North, as do most of the authors I cite in this study, to emphasize its "fundamentally *created* status" (Grace 2001, 15).[21] Contrary to Francis's authoritative assertion, the real, physical North is not an "officially" agreed upon location (nor does he mention who the "officials" are to whom he is referring).

The myth of "Canada-as-North" permeates both anglophone and francophone Canadian culture, and has become one of the country's defining metanarratives (Grace 2001, 33). Historian W. L. Mortan has emphasized "that Canada was understood as north from its earliest European discovery" (Wynn 2009, 12). This mythology has been used to engender a stronger sense of Canadian nationalism in English Canada, and is also a significant part of the Québécois identity. The aim of this chapter is to outline the state of research on the North as a discursive system in Canada in a comparative fashion, examining the development of the idea

[21] Sherrill Grace, one of the leading scholars on *Canada and the Idea of North* (as her comprehensive 2001 study is entitled) explains it this way: "Throughout this book I consider the *creation* – sometimes very deliberate and self-conscious, sometimes more emotional and intuitive – of North as idea, or, put another way, the creation in words, sounds, images, signs, and symbols of a northern *mentality*. *My* capitalization of the word North [...] is intended as a small reminder *passim* of this fundamentally *created* status. North is not *natural*, *real*, a geological or meteorological matter of treelines, eskers, permafrost, snow, and temperatures […] North, while it has certainly been naturalized as essential to Canada, is a human construct, like Canada itself. It has become part of what Bordieu calls the 'habitus,' and we have learned to accept it as a given. North is a discursive formation […] and as such it has done and continues to do a great deal of ideological and practical work" (Grace 2001, 15; emphases in original).

of North in both English Canada and in francophone Quebec. Before delving into a cultural and historical study, some of the terms essential to our understanding of North must first be defined.

2.1 Where is North?

First of all I must ask where, exactly, is North and what is meant by this seemingly simple yet profoundly elusive term? The precise geographic area indicated by the term "the North" has been much debated and defined by scholars across many disciplines, and its location is continually in flux (Rosenthal 2009, 26). As Peter Davidson points out in his 2005 study of the cultural understanding of North since antiquity around the world, including Canada, "[e]veryone has a different north [...] in everyone's mind there is a line drawn across the maps, known to that person alone, of where 'the north' [...] begins" (Davidson 2005, 20). Even restricting our discussion to the territory of Canada, not taking into account the circumpolar North for our purposes here, does not simplify matters. By a geographer's definition, the North makes up 78 percent of the country's area (Bone 2003, 5) and is delineated

> as consisting of two biomes, the Arctic and Subarctic. These biomes extend over a vast area—nearly 80 per cent of Canada—that includes the three territories and reaches into the territories of seven provinces. The southern boundary of the North is marked by the places where the northern coniferous forest of the Subarctic gives way to other natural vegetation zones such as the grasslands of the Canadian Prairies. (Bone 2003, 2)

Imaginary lines on maps such as the Arctic Circle[22] or the sixtieth parallel (60 degrees latitude forms the southern border of Canada's three territories, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Nunavut) are often used to define the southern boundary of the North. Many English-speaking Canadians would initially refer to the area "north of 60" as the proper definition of the North (see Francis 1997, 152). "In Canada, the terms 'Arctic' and 'North' are regularly used interchangeably and generally refer to the same area, the administratively delineated territories above 60° north latitude−a geographical definition developed in the age of exploration, drawing upon the mirror delineation of the Antarctic at 60° south" (Keskitalo, E.

[22] See Chartier 2010, 31, for a discussion of Hamelin's redrawing of the circumpolar world in an oval shape (not the round shape of the Arctic Circle) due to climatic conditions such as currents, oceanity, and continentality. This oval shape indicates that the cold, Arctic influences descend further south in Quebec than in Europe, for example. See also chapter 2.2.1.

Carina H. 2009, 27). Keskitalo reminds that, especially from a northern European perspective, Canada has been criticized for perpetuating the ideology of exploration.[23] This arbitrary boundary of sixty degrees latitude, however, takes into account neither the geographic and climatic similarities nor the people groups located just south of 60, in the northern regions of the seven largest Canadian provinces. In Quebec, *le Nord* also clearly includes Nunavik, the vast Arctic part of the province north of the fifty-fifth parallel, which is home to many Inuit (and is often referred to as *le grand nord*). Thus the North in Canada clearly descends farther south than the sixtieth parallel.

Some scholars use the terms "real North" to differentiate between the geographical location and the idea of North or the "imagined North" (see Rosenthal 2009, 26). The "real North" (Rosenthal does not precisely define it) seems to refer to a geographical area similar to the one described by Bone, above. Another way of looking at the North is to consider it from the standpoint of human geography. The "real North" has often been viewed by southerners as a resource-rich hinterland, a frontier for exploration and development, but also as a cultural heartland which must be protected by paternalistic policies (R. Shields 1991, 165)). Yet for the Aboriginal peoples of the "real North" it is their homeland. For Inuit, the Indigenous people of Canada's far North, the conception of southern Canada as North may be disconcerting or even unacceptable (see Rosenthal 2004 and 2009). Inuk Alexina Kupplu, a college teacher in Nunavut, has commented:

> I do not see Canada as a northern country. The southern part of Canada is not northern. […] Southern Canada is not a northern country. […] [North is] just where the predominant population are the people who are indigenous to the area. (Rosenthal 2009, 32)

For the sake of simplicity and clarity, I will refer to Rosenthal's "real North" as the "far North." As has been tirelessly noted, most Canadians have never been to the far North. The Arctic is "beyond the physical acquaintance of most [of] the 99.7 percent of Canadians who live south of the 60th parallel" (Wynn 2009, 10). In fact, 75 percent of Canadians live in a narrow strip along the southern border of the country, within 160 kilometers of the United States (R. Shields 1991, 198), yet the harsh winter conditions most Canadians endure even in

[23] See Keskitalo 2009 for a critical view of Canada's equation of the Arctic with the frontier and Louis-Edmond Hamelin's nordicity index, as is described in this chapter. Keskitalo explains the "notably different view of the 'North'" in the *Norden* countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) which does not connect the North to the Arctic (a term used "to refer mainly to areas located north of the mainland in each state" Keskitalo, E. Carina H. 2009, 31). Keskitalo takes issue with Canada's traditional ideology of regulating the North to the periphery, a frontier to be used for southern purposes.

these southern geographies remind them "that they live in the shadow of that global refrigerator, the North Pole" (Wynn 2009, 10).

2.1.1 Hamelin ô Nordicity Index: Quantifying North

When considering how to define or delimit the Canadian North, one must take into account the foundational work of eminent Québécois geographer and linguist Louis-Edmond Hamelin,[24] who coined the term *nordicité* in 1965. The neologism was rapidly adopted by both researchers and then the general public. Nordicity is not merely a geographic term for quantitative measurement, but "refers to 'the state, degree, awareness and *representation* of cold territoriality in the northern hemisphere'" (Chartier 2010, 31–32; emphasis mine).

Hamelin's nordicity index is a quantitative system he used to measure the northerliness of any place using ten variables, known as *valeurs polaires* (polar units), to represent a combination of human and physical facets of the North, including population, economic activity, isolation, temperature, and types of ice. According to Hamelin, the maximum possible value is one thousand polar units, which is allocated to the North Pole, while the minimum requirement for a place to be considered northern is two hundred polar units (Hamelin 1978, 17–27). Hamelin's classification divides the North into four regions: Near North, Middle North, Far North, and Extreme North, with the most populated areas of Canada, including all major cities, falling into the ecumene region named "Base Canada." Nordicity is not static, however. The nordicity rating of a town or city can change over time based on factors such as fluctuation in population size, economic development, and access to transportation. For Hamelin, the southern boundary of the North is flexible and thus moves when any of the variables in a place changes significantly (Bone 2003, 9). Nordicity can also be seasonal, meaning that during winter the polar units allotted to a place can be greatly increased depending on the local climate and accessibility. Thus, a southern city can be considered part of the North only during winter; this concept, known as seasonal nordicity or winterity is foundational for my thinking in this study, and will be revisited below in chapter 2.4.

[24] Hamelin was a professor at Université Laval from 1951 to 1978 and founded the Nordic Studies Centre in 1961. Some of his many publications include *Le Québec nordique* (1968), *Le Nord canadien comme espace* (1971), *Nordicité canadienne* (1975; translated as *Canadian Nordicity*, 1978, received the *Your No* Governor General's Award), *Écho des pays froids* (1996), and *Discours du Nord* (2002).

Hamelin coined the neologism nordicity as well as over two hundred derivative terms related to nordology after finding the French language to be lacking sufficient vocabulary to accurately describe the complexity of the North. The comprehensiveness of the concept of nordicity is what has made it innovative: "As Hamelin says, 'comprehensive nordicity refers to systems of thought, knowledge, vocabularies, intercultural know-how, arts and humanities sensibilities, expressions of opinion, application in territorial, political and economic fields; in short, nordicity denotes the state of a northern country'" (Chartier 2010, 32). Hamelin's multifaceted concept of nordicity has been foundational in shaping current discourse in literary and cultural studies of the North, encouraging scholars to take into account social and cultural factors in addition to climate and geography.[25] Chartier explains that the complexity and dexterity of the terms created by Hamelin go beyond a simple definition: "We also owe to him what I call the 'word-sites,' such as 'nordicity,' 'winterity,' and 'mountainousness,' which have not only opened vast, new, and fertile fields of research, but have also modified the way in which the peoples of the North represent themselves with a vocabulary of their own" (Chartier 2014, 19; my translation).

As a geographer, Hamelin's contribution to the interpretation of the *representations* of North have been distilled by Chartier into four key points: "(1) 'North' must be considered a circumpolar entity; (2) a study of 'North' requires the creation of specific vocabulary; (3) the boundaries of 'North' are variable; and (4) the territory of 'North' must be understood as the sum of its physical, social and cultural parts" (Chartier 2007c, 38). Thus I conclude that Hamelin's understanding of nordicity is helpful not only for geography but also for literary and cultural studies, going far beyond the understanding of the North in the natural sciences.[26] Although I build on the concepts Hamelin articulated, I will not be following his empirical system for determining "where North is" in this study. Rather, I borrow his term seasonal nordicity, which I will further explore in chapter 2.5 as a starting point for understanding that the North does indeed come south to take the cities of southern Canada into its icy grasp.

[25] For further discussion of Hamelin's concepts of nordicity and related terms as they pertain to literary and cultural studies, see Chartier 2007c, 36–42, Chartier 2010, 31–32, and Grace 2001, 49. Hamelin's numerous books on nordicity are, of course, the ultimate source for his complete geographical study of nordicity; see Hamelin 1978, 1993, 1996, and 2002.

[26] Although Hamelin used Quebec, especially, as his laboratory and worked almost exclusively with Canadian data, he claimed that his nordicity index could be applied to any polar location in the world. Keskitalo, among others, sharply criticizes Hamelin "for ignoring the fact that certain social characteristics of areas are a result of the particular historical development of the state and state policy (its territorial status that limits development and self-determination in the area) rather than of latitude, and thus [are] particular to Canada" (Keskitalo, E. Carina H. 2009, 29).

2.1.2 North as Discourse

Although there is undoubtedly an actual, geographical, "real" North, this study is preoccupied with the constructed, southern discourse of North as it is reflected in English Canadian and Québécois fiction. The definition of North relevant for this study, then, is not a precise geographic location, but rather the idea, or *imaginaire*, of North in English Canadian and Québécois culture and literature. The North referred to here is a discursive system of representation comprised of characters, settings, symbols, themes, and colors, as has been demonstrated by the two foremost literary scholars on the North today, in English Canada (Sherrill Grace) and Quebec (Daniel Chartier). Chartier explains the link between Hamelin's concepts and literary studies:

> By developing the concepts of 'nordicity' and 'wintricity', we can consider the 'North' and its components as a semiotic code, or a discursive system: this has the advantage of relieving the 'idea of North' of geographical constraints so that it can be studied in terms of representation as well as cultural, literary and symbolic discourse. (Chartier 2007b, 43)

In Canada, the North has, indeed, been "relieved of geographic constraints." As we have seen above, there are many different definitions of North. Canadians each have individual conceptions and interpretations of what is meant by "the North," which have in turn been influenced by cultural productions representing North such as films, novels, and advertising. As Sherrill Grace reminds us, "North is an idea as much as any physical region that can be mapped for nordicity" (Grace 2001, xii).

Though the cultural myth of Canada as "the true North strong and free" is pervasive today, the North has not always been dominant in the Canadian psyche. Most nineteenth-century Canadians did not regard the Arctic as part of Canada and were focused on "an agrarian rather than a northern mythology" in the south (Wynn 2009, 15-16). It was really only in the past few decades that Canada and Quebec truly began to define themselves as Nordic cultures, even though one can find many earlier works of literature and art influenced by the North and winter (see Chartier 2006, 34). As mentioned in chapter 1.1, several literary critics have taken on this vast and interdisciplinary field of study before me (Collet, Warwick, Mitcham), although no one has studied the idea of North in a comparative fashion between English Canada and Quebec in such a manner.[27] In the following two sub-chapters I trace the

[27] See Kannenberg 2014, where I also introduce these concepts.

historical development of the idea of North in English Canadian and Québécois literature and culture.

2.2 The Québécois *Imaginaire du Nord*

The development of an *imaginaire du Nord* in Quebec can be traced back to the origins of French colonial settlement along the St. Lawrence River beginning with the founding of Quebec City in 1608. From travel narratives by French explorers and missionaries, and continuing on in legends, essays, and novels, the North has been a predominant theme in French Canadian literature from its beginnings.[28] Hamelin claims that early writings by Jesuit missionaries emphasizing the extreme difficulties of winters in New France were justified, not least because from the sixteenth century until around 1875 climatic conditions were colder than at present (Hamelin 2002, 21), and thus the winter, cold, snow, and ice had a very significant influence on the population and its cultural imaginary. French Canadian *contes* and legends of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries – such as *La Chasse-galerie*, the most famous version written by Honoré Beaugrand (1892) – are full of northern characters and are still well-known and celebrated today as landmarks in Quebec literary development.

The *pays d'en haut* (upper country), a concept deeply embedded in Quebec history, literature, and culture, is the precursor to the modern use of the nomenclature *le Nord*, and both terms are used with elasticity (Warwick 1968, 5). The *pays d'en haut* is a mobile, shifting location geographically tied to the historic fur trade which continually receded as settlement of North America progressed, once referring to Montreal, and then to the lands reached by going up the canoe routes from the French colonial settlements along the St. Lawrence River, later referring to the lands west of the Mississippi and the Canadian Prairies.[29] Grace notes that "[f]or anyone living in Montreal in the 1860s or 1870s, North was the *pays d'en haut*: by the turn of the century, the discovery of gold in the Klondike had extended our northern reach and led to a reshaping and renaming of a part of the country" (Grace 2001, xii). The *pays d'en haut* connoted freedom and adventure, the possibilities of expansion, trade, and resources, while at the same time being a territory beyond the law and a menace to French royal authority, personified by the *coureur de bois* and the *voyageur*. The

[28] The term French Canadian, or in French *canadien*, was used for French-speaking people in the territory of Quebec and Canada from the beginning of French colonial settlement until the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. Thus, I also use the term French Canadian to refer to this time period. During the 1960s the term Québécois came into popular use to denote the francophone people of Quebec. Since then, the term French Canadian has come to refer only to francophone Canadians native to other Canadian provinces or territories.

[29] For more on the history of the *pays d'en haut* and its significance for Quebec's cultural imaginary of North, see Warwick 1968, which I have condensed here.

voyageur was a French Canadian man who hired himself out to explorers or traders (first from France, later England) to paddle and portage their canoes through the wilderness. French Canada was founded on the fundamental opposition between the frugal, sedentary lives of the *habitants* versus the boisterous, roaming ways of the *coureur de bois*, a rebel figure, running free in the wilderness of the boreal forest, trapping small animals and living with the Aboriginal peoples. The *coureur de bois* and *voyageur* were important figures in the collective consciousness and cultural memory of New France, seen as outsiders living in conflict with the dominant Catholic religion, yet they were also admirable, adventurous characters who represented the conflict between authority and freedom. Thus the North, synonymous at the time with the *pays d'en haut*, was a place to shake off societal restraints and conventions, a wild place to escape the authority of the Church and Crown. Alison Mitcham points out a fundamental difference between the development of the idea of North in French and English Canada:

> Particularly in French Canada the northern wilderness has long symbolized escape from dreary settlements and conventional responsibilities. Thus in French Canada a myth has grown up around the 'bûcheron' and the 'voyageur' and their exploits in 'le pays d'en haut'. In English Canada the North has been much less the matter of myth and legend, and consequently a less common fictional theme. Only recently indeed has it begun to impinge deeply on the English-Canadian consciousness. (Mitcham 1983, 9)

Those *voyageurs* with the most seniority wore the famous *ceinture fléchée* which is still a symbol of the North in Quebec (Warwick 1968, 23). Note, for example, that Bohomme Carnaval, the snowman mascot of Quebec City's winter carnival, wears the colorfully striped belt as an essential part of his costume to this day, maintaining the tradition of the *pays d'en haut* in Quebec's cultural memory.[30]

After the Conquest of New France by Great Britain and the Treaty of Paris of 1763, Great Britain acquired the French colony of Quebec. The *pays d'en haut*, which by then included the large Hudson's Bay drainage basin farther to the north and west of the territory of Quebec at the time, continued to be a place of escape, now from British colonial rule. Literature became the means of continuing to spread French Canadian language, values, and Catholic influence to as much of the territory as possible, despite political domination by the

[30] There is also a canoe race on the icy St. Lawrence River, reminiscent of the voyageurs, one of Carnaval's many outdoor activities conducted in freezing conditions.

British and, later, the planned assimilation of French Canadians by Lord Durham.[31] Thus writing emerged that heavily featured the *pays d'en haut*. For Catholic priest Curé Labelle,[32] the North was the "'main highway for French-Canadian nationalism'" (Hamelin 1978, 5). The intellectual elite of the mid-nineteenth century encouraged French Canadians to take possession of the land beyond the St. Lawrence River valley, first of all the Laurentians and the Eastern Townships, to counter the exodus of settlers leaving the province for the manufacturing towns of the north-eastern United States by opening the territory up to colonization, agriculture, and the exploitation of natural resources (Nareau 2004, 43). These regions, which are now in metropolitan Montreal's backyard, were then still the untamed "North," and were to French Canadians what the west was to Americans and English Canadians: a promised land ripe for pioneers (see Morissonneau 1985, 58). Quebec historian Christian Morissonneau writes, "Au Québec, notre Ouest c'est le Nord. Et le 'Go West, young man!' se traduisait par 'En avant vers le Nord, c'est là qu'est le salut!'"[33] (Morissonneau 1978, 106). Grace notes that at the turn of the twentieth century, many Quebec writers were promoting northern Quebec as "the true home of the French Canadian nation" where "Catholic identity could flourish, protected, in *le grand Nord*, where francophones would be free of southern, English Canadian, and American influence" (Grace 2001, 173). The *pays d'en haut*, agricultural values and the civilizing mission were restored especially after the conscription crisis of World War I and the new nationalism in politics which emerged from it (Warwick 1968, 31). After the second World War, then Premier Maurice Duplessis began to open up Quebec's northlands to development which resulted in a euphoria about the North and modernization (Hamelin 1978, 6–9).

2.2.1 Quebec as the Southernmost Location of North in the World

As the preceding survey has shown, the *pays d'en haut* and the Northwest were both being explored and developed during the birth and formation of French Canadian literature and thus had significant imaginative effects on that literature, folklore, and identity. In analyzing Warwick's literary *pays d'en haut* map, Grace points out that "the French mapped *all* of

[31] John George Lambton, Earl of Durham, was sent to Canada by the British Crown to determine the causes of the Rebellions of 1837-8. His famous report, published in 1839, included the recommendation of assimilating French Canadians, uniting Upper and Lower Canada (today's Ontario and Quebec). The report notoriously called the French Canadian nation a people of "no literature and no history."

[32] François-Xavier-Antoine Labelle (1833-1891), also nicknamed "The King of the North."

[33] Translation: "In Quebec, our west is the North. And the 'Go West, young man!' is translated by 'Go forward towards the North, that's where salvation is!'" Scholars writing in English about English Canada have also compared the myth of the American west to the Canadian North, see Rosenthal 2005.

Canada (of what would *become* a nation-state), that they mapped it as North, and that Quebec, as a northern region, is the key defining metonymy of national Canadian space and identity" (Grace 2001, 85–86, emphases added). Thus in French Canadian literary history, all of Quebec was viewed as being "the North." There are climatic and geographic reasons for Quebec to lay a special claim to nordicity: Quebec is the place where the North descends the farthest south in the world.

> Montreal, whose latitude is more in line with cities in southern France like Marseille than Scandinavian capitals like Oslo, has harsh winters and is located at the southernmost limit of the polar region. Paradoxically, the continental climate and the cold current from Labrador, which runs down the gulf and estuary of the St. Lawrence, make Quebec the only place where the Arctic reaches such low latitudes. Thus, Quebec is the place where the North extends the farthest south. (Chartier 2006, 35)

Sherrill Grace includes Ontario in this designation (explaining why central Canadian cultural elites tend to dominate the production of the idea of North, see chapter 2.3.1 below): "But just a glance at a cartographic attempt to locate North […] helps to explain why Quebec and Ontario should feel they have some special claim on nordicity: all the lines for delineating the North – be it the Shield, the treeline, or the permafrost – dip furthest south in those provinces" (Grace 2001, 52).

In sum, since the beginning of French settlement in New France literature was being written in and about the colony, and nordicity and winterity were a means of rooting that literature in the land and signifying the differences between Quebec's culture and that of France. Quebec defines itself not only as a North American society of the French language, but also as a Nordic and winter culture (Chartier 2008b, 90). I will further discuss the representation of winter in Quebec literature in chapter 2.4.2 – first, I will investigate the development of the idea of North in anglophone Canada.

2.3 The English Canadian Idea of North

Canada's vast landmass and highly multicultural population present challenges for its national unity and sense of identity. As Kaufman explains, "[s]tates can instill a collective national identity in their citizenries through the promotion of national symbols and myths, and in turn, individuals' beliefs about what is important to their national identity can become codified into a collective representation of the nation" (Kaufman 2008, 467). Over the past two centuries, the idea of North has been deliberately used by the Canadian government and cultural elites to

give the widespread, sparse, and multicultural population a symbol upon which to base their national unity and as a means of differentiating Canada's culture from that of U.S. Americans. Human geographer Rob Shields asserts that the myth of North in English Canada "is central to nationalist discourse and plays an important role in cementing the far-flung regions of the country into a nation, and more specifically a 'northern Nation', wherein all share in a common cultural phantasmagoria which makes Canadians different from Americans and similar to Scandinavians by virtue of their association with a northern frontier" (R. Shields 1991, 8–9).

The British government transferred its far northern territories to Canada in 1880, yet the North was already an instrumental part of constructing a Canadian national identity distinguishable from the United States starting with the Confederation of Canada in 1867 (Zimmerman 2005, 253–54). As the young country sought to establish its place in the world while dwarfed by its southern neighbor, Canadians were encouraged to view themselves as a hardy northern people. The Canada First Movement of the 1860s and 1870s led by R. G. Haliburton, though not very influential, was one of the first to promote the idea that the Anglo-Saxons were a "physically as well as morally strong" race "predestined to populate the North" and that "only they would be able to thrive in the rough climatic and geographical conditions there" (Rosenthal 2005, 285).[34] [35]

2.3.1 The North as Tool for Constructing Canadian Nationalism

The idea of North as a defining aspect of Canadian identity began to gain wide popular acceptance through the work of Canadian painters like the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson in the 1910s and 1920s. These iconic wilderness paintings are well-known to Canadians and still greatly influence the collective idea of North today.[36] After World War I, a new nationalism emerged in Canada, which had entered the war as a dominion loyal to the British

[34] For more on the racialist notion of the North see R. Shields 1991, 178–79 and Rosenthal 2009, 27.

[35] Rosenthal argues that the Canada First movement's "early attempt at defining national identity by mythologizing the North as an ideal space for the northern races of Canada had to fail because the French population of Canada could not be subsumed under it. […] Quebec and the rest of Canada could only become one nation because they did not dwell on consensus but rather on respecting the other as part of the nation" (Rosenthal 2005, 285). While I agree that English and French Canada had different discourses of North in the late nineteenth century based on different cultural referents, the discussion of the *imaginaire du nord* in the preceding sub-chapter shows that the French Canadian nation also saw itself as predestined to inhabit the North, as was preached by Curé Labelle (see chapter 2.2.1).

[36] Although considered the epitome of Canadiana, the painters were inspired by Scandinavian artists at an exhibit in Buffalo in 1913, and the Group of Seven's work is acknowledged as bearing resemblance to that of other European artists (see Wright 2004, 33; Grace 2001, 1), thus stressing the interconnectedness of the circumpolar northern imagination.

crown, but exited it heralding the performance of the Canadian troops at Vimy Ridge, ready to become an independent, post-imperial nation taking its place at the table of international affairs. In the glow of post-war nationalism, political elites attempted to define Canadian identity and heal wounds that had been caused by the 1917 conscription crisis, which divided the country largely along linguistic lines, as French Canadians were almost unanimously opposed to forced conscription. The romantic idea of North, spearheaded by the Group of Seven, as a place of purification for all of the ills of war and modern life was a fundamental part of this new nationalism for the increasingly urban populace. Fear (and rejection) of polluting American values and influence was central to the development of Canadian nationalism (see Wright 2004, 36–37). This fear was perpetuated throughout the twentieth century, as English Canadian culture, especially, continually strove to define itself against American culture, with the myth of the North being one of the dominant factors of differentiation:

> Here, in this heady mix of myth and history, lay the promise of a modern Canadian nation whose northern virtuosity would transcend both the corrupt decadence of Europe and the crass materialism of the United States. Here, in a conception of the North that embraced the nation's 'two founding races' equally, lay the promise of Wilfrid Laurier's famous dictum that the twentieth century would belong to Canada. (Wright 2004, 38–39)

Chartier, in turn, notes that using the North as a unifying national myth and to differentiate English Canada from the United States has become even more important in recent decades as the Quebec sovereignty movement has caused political and cultural rifts that make the use of the presence of French-speaking Quebec within Canada as a claim to Canada's uniqueness even more problematic (Chartier 2006, 34).

By appealing to the emotions, the myth of North makes all people from St. John's to Victoria feel Canadian, although, as mentioned earlier, 75 percent of them reside within 160 kilometers of the southern border with the United States. Peter Davidson explains that "[a]bove this line, Canada is a land of vast, empty spaces, mostly icebound, peopled largely by the imagination, by ideas of north" (Davidson 2005, 188). Stephen Leacock (1869-1944), one of Canada's most internationally celebrated short story writers in the early twentieth century,[37] articulated it thus:

[37] For more on the history, development, and popularity of the short story as a genre in Canadian literature, see Nischik 2007.

> It's the great spaces that appeal. To all of us here, the vast unknown country of the North, reaching away to the polar seas, supplies a peculiar mental background. I like to think that in a few short hours in a train or car I can be in the primeval wilderness of the North [...] I never have gone to the James Bay; I never go to it; I never shall. But somehow I'd feel lonely without it. (Leacock 1977, 80)

Significantly, Leacock wrote this oft-quoted passage about never going to the North in his Montreal study. "In fact, he is perfectly content just thinking about the North stretching away outside his Montreal window" (Grace 2001, 15).[38] Here is another example of English Canadian scholars, both Leacock and Grace, not considering Montreal to be a location of North itself, but that North is several hours travel away. Leacock's notable quote sums up the idea of North for many southern Canadians: it is a mythical place which fills the imagination, provides "a peculiar mental background" but is not a real place they would like to venture to. Indeed, the "idea of North" is a creation of southern Canadians and has been used to further southern Canadian interests (Grace 2001, 16), be they economic, political, or cultural.

The appropriation of the North for southern Canadian aims (nationalist, environmental, economic, or otherwise) has been widely recognized by academics and has been both criticized (see Hulan 2002, 10; Francis 1997; R. Shields 1991, 164) and perpetuated (see Grace 2001, 268; Grace 2009, 157–58). It should be noted that one significant scholar, Renée Hulan, in *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture* (2002), questions Canada as a northern nation. Hulan seeks "to unsettle the idea of the north as evoked by some of our writers by disputing the notion of a central, unifying national experience" (Hulan 2002, 186). Hulan argues, contrary to Grace, that the imagined North is the "product of white male imperialist desire" (Moss 2004, 133), thus being Nordic is not native or natural to Canada but artificially generated by a powerful minority.

The use of the mythology of North to rally Canadian nationalism was especially evident at the Olympic Winter Games hosted by Vancouver and Whistler, British Columbia, in February 2010. The Olympic organizing committee (VANOC) used excerpts from the lyrics of the Canadian national anthem, "O Canada" – which have a very strong emotional resonance among English Canadians – for marketing purposes. The phrase "True North Strong and Free" was proudly emblazoned on Olympic merchandise from T-shirts to water bottles, appealing to Canadians' identification of themselves as a northern nation in order to

[38] For an analysis of the symbolism of windows and nordicity in *Dogs at the Perimeter* by Madeleine Thien, see chapter 6.2.

bolster unity, national pride, and a belief in Canadian athletic prowess in winter sporting events. Although the anthem was originally a French Canadian patriotic poem, "O Canada" is rarely sung in francophone Quebec today.[39] As many Québécois do not identify with Canadian nationalism and are not as familiar with the song, the anthem does not carry nearly the emotional nor patriotic weight among Québécois that it does in English Canada, and, interestingly, the French version of the anthem does not refer to the North at all. The Québécois rather take as their national folk anthem Gilles Vigneault's chanson "Mon Pays" (1964), which famously declares "Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver."[40] Significantly, VANOC requested the rights of the song for the opening ceremony of the 2010 Olympics, which Vigneault refused for fear that they would translate, shorten, or sing the song out of its original Québécois nationalist context.[41]

Despite the fact that the 2010 Olympics were located in one of the mildest climates in Canada, the Vancouver Olympic organizers appropriated the figure of the inukshuk[42] on the logo for the Games, rather than using a local icon. Chartier cites the sale of the inukshuk to tourists in southern cities like Toronto as an example of how English Canada is perpetrating "modern colonialism" (Chartier 2006, 34).[43] The VANOC marketing strategy thus exemplifies Shields's "True North Strong and Free" space-myth, an instance of southern Canada appropriating a symbol of the far North (such as the polar bear or inukshuk) to project itself as northern.[44]

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[39] The English version of the national anthem by Robert Stanley Weir is not a translation but a paraphrase, and was revised several times, its most recent form taking shape in 1980 when it was accepted in the National Anthem Act (see R. Shields 1991, 200).

[40] Translation: "My country is not a country, it's winter." The song invokes wind, cold, snow, and ice as a metaphor for Quebec's cultural isolation, see Chartier 2008b, 96.

[41] See article in *Le Devoir* from February 17, 2010 (Robitaille 2010). The article quotes Vigneault's agent Pierre Hébert, who commented that he has never given away rights to his songs for an event and that few of Vigneault's songs would be suitable in English Canada.

[42] The inukshuk is a stone figure traditionally built by the native peoples of the Arctic to function as a point of reference and travel marker.

[43] It is worth noting that the inukshuk is also a symbol used in Quebec: A large stone inukshuk stands outside the Assemblée Nationale in Quebec City. However, this symbol was erected in honor of the Sanarrutik Partnership Agreement the Inuit people of Nunavik (Northern Quebec) and the government of Quebec, and thus this symbol can be seen as also being native to territorial Quebec.

[44] For the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia, the Canadian Olympic Committee launched a marketing campaign called #WeAreWinter to bolster support for the athletes and, obviously, a love of and association with winter as a fundamental part of Canadian identity. A video was posted on the official website of the Canadian Olympic Team (http://olympic.ca/wearewinter/) which Canadians were encouraged to share on social media platforms using the hashtag #WeAreWinter. Canadians were also encouraged to use the hashtag to post their own pictures or thoughts about the Games on social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram. There was also a concurrent French video and campaign called #NousSommeslHiver (see http://olympique.ca/noussommeslhiver-2/). Further research into the reception and success of this campaign appropriating seasonal nordicity as encapsulating Canadian identity in both English Canada and Quebec would prove fascinating, but goes beyond the scope of the current study.

A similar cultural example of a southern sports empire appropriating North is the recent rebranding of the Toronto Raptor's basketball team with the hashtag #WeTheNorth. The Raptors are the only NBA basketball team in Canada (after the Vancouver Grizzlies relocated to Memphis, Tennessee in 2001), and sought to redefine their brand as they approached their twentieth anniversary in 2015. In time for the 2014 spring playoffs, the Sid Lee marketing agency had shot a stirring video that became a successful campaign, appealing to all basketball fans from coast to coast to unite behind the Toronto team (Brady 2014; no pagination). The "myth of North" was again here used to unite a far-flung population as one unified body of sports fans from the North versus all of the teams south of the border. A #WeTheNorth Raptors promotional video equates being "the North" with being outsiders and celebrates being on the fringes. The images are of black men playing basketball (local, non-professional players who responded to a casting call) at night in Toronto on an outdoor court amidst high-rise apartment buildings, as well as a few on-court Raptors outtakes. The city of Toronto's skyline and CN Tower are prominent; no reference to the rest of the country is made. Some images of snow are cut into a more urban, warm-weather narrative. A Husky also appears at times on the outdoor court, "a nod to the Toronto Huskies of 1946-47, who played in a league that would later become the NBA" (Brady 2014; no pagination), and a Husky is of course also an icon of the Far North. Cheri Bradish, a sports marketing professor at Ryerson University comments in Brady's *Globe and Mail* article, "Not since the I Am Canadian campaign [by Molson in the mid-nineties] have we seen a campaign hit so many good notes and resonate so well with Canadians." Ahead of the Raptors' preseason games in fall 2014 in Montreal and Vancouver, those cities were plastered with "We The North" billboards, and t-shirts were popular in and outside of Toronto. Another marketing representative adds,

> We thought, 'Why are we only speaking to the eight million people in the GTA [Greater Toronto Area]? We should we speaking to the 35 million across Canada.' […] 'We The North' was never supposed to be a commercial; it was just supposed to be a brand manifesto. But everyone saw it and fell in love with it, and we thought basketball fans across the country would fall in love with this. (Brady 2014; no pagination)

These sporting examples are just a few of many marketing campaigns that appropriate the myth of North to both bolster Canadian unity and price, and turn a commercial profit.

Sherrill Grace confirms that the idea of North is "emphatically a construction of southerners (or in earlier stages Europeans, Romans, Greeks), paradoxically invoked to

distinguish us from those who are more southern. […] [I]deas of North tend to serve southern Canadian interests be they psychological, spiritual, physical, material, or political" (Grace 2001, 16). Interestingly, although she acknowledges this, Grace goes on to use the "idea of North" to bolster her own nationalist aims, suggesting her "Magnetic North thesis" as a means of preserving national identity (Grace 2001, 268). Grace's book *Canada and the Idea of North* has been called "autobiographical" (Moss 2004, 133); Grace clearly states her personal agenda for writing the book is her own love of Canada and desire to understand and unite it.[45] In her epilogue, Grace argues for the perpetuation of the Canadian nationalist idea of North as a means of uniting all Canadians, including new immigrants:

> However, if we want to preserve a national identity (and I do), North still seems to me to hold the greatest attraction as a force and as an idea. But the idea must keep changing. We must abandon any lingering allegiance to the Laurentian thesis[46] and endorse another story and ideology: let me suggest the Magnetic North thesis. To endorse the Magnetic North thesis is to understand ourselves as a people drawn by ideas of North, who accept the practical, exigent realities measured by Hamelin's nordicity indices. Indeed, to reject these indices would be nonsensical, as the 1998 Ice Storm surely reminds us[47] […] the magnetism of North can attract (is even irresistible to) everyone who lives, or comes to live, in Canada. […] To accept the Magnetic North thesis of our national identity […] is to accept North as multiple and always changing and to respect the diversity and heterogeneity of our home and native land. It is to search for new ways of creating an inclusive nationality that inscribes an empowering ideology of dialogic hybridity. (Grace 2001, 268)

As I have demonstrated above, English Canada's "idea of North" has been constructed by cultural and political elites as a means of uniting the vast, sparsely populated and culturally diverse population. All of the scholars I have cited above ñ Sherrill Grace, Rob Shields, Daniel Chartier, Renée Hulan, Caroline Rosenthal, and Graeme Wynn ñ agree that the North has been used to set Canada apart from the United States and to give Canadians a cultural myth around which to find their identity. Whatever the origins, the North has often been represented in Canadian literature and culture, to which I now turn.

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[45] "This book is about Canada. […] Why? Because I am Canadian and my love for and desire to understand this stubborn, complex, infuriating place that I call home drives me to ask, not 'where is here?' –Frye's old question−but what and who is here, and how the *here* called Canada has been constructed, represented, and articulated" (Grace 2001, xi–xii).

[46] See chapter 1 for an explanation of the Laurentian thesis.

[47] See chapter 5 for a discussion of the Ice Storm of 1998 in Montreal fiction.

2.3.1.1 The North in English Canadian Literature

The wilderness has been a dominant trope in English Canadian literature since British immigrants, such as Catharine Parr Traill and her sister Susanna Moodie, began writing about the rigors of carving out a life in the nineteenth century Canadian bush. The North has continued to be an influential discourse in English Canadian literature since its beginnings in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, dating back to the animal stories of Charles G. D. Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton. Also very popular in their heyday were adventurous local color stories set in the North (referring to the fur trading posts of the Northwest, Hudson and James Bay areas). First appearing in Gilbert Parker's 1892 collection of short stories *Pierre and His People*, the local color story was also popularized by D. C. Scott. Robert Service's poems *Songs of a Sourdough*, first published in 1907, which focus on the Klondike Gold Rush in the Yukon, are still well-known today (see Service 1989 [1940]).[48]

Due to the harsh cold and isolation of the North, it has frequently been constructed as a moral test space (Rosenthal 2005, 285). Representations of the North often feature several typological figures, such as Mounties (noble policemen on horseback), gold prospectors like the Mad Trapper of Rat River, Indians, and Wendigoes. The North has been associated with the uncanny and inexplicable phenomena, as a place beyond the law and where people (usually men) are driven crazy, and "one of the most protracted tragic dramas of the nineteenth century, the disappearance of, and long search for, the explorer Sir John Franklin" (see Davidson 2005, 187–88).[49]

Literary critic Northrop Frye's classic work *The Bush Garden* (1971) is responsible for depicting the North as a "sinister and menacing" monster. Frye coined the term "garrison mentality," indicating the tendency in the Canadian imagination to represent beleaguered communities struggling with and trying to defend themselves from a hostile environment.[50]

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[48] See, for example, Grace's *Canada and the Idea of North* (2001), which gives many examples of the North as portrayed in Canadian art, drama, music, and fiction. See also Giehmann (2011), *Writing the Northland*, which deals with Robert Service's idea of North at length.

[49] Sir John Franklin was a British Royal Navy officer who explored the Canadian Arctic searching for the Northwest Passage. His fourth journey to the Arctic (1845-1847) proved to be fatal: He, his two ships the *Terror* and *Erebus* and all of the 128 crew perished. The Franklin expedition and subsequent searches for them have repeatedly appeared in Canadian literature and culture, see Atwood 1995 and references to Franklin throughout this chapter. David Solway's 2003 poetry pastiche *Franklin*, deconstructing representations of Sir John Franklin's fatal search for the Northwest passage, made him the first English-language writer to win the *Grand Prix du livre de Montréal* in 2004 (Leclerc and Simon 2005, 29). There was great celebration in Canada in September 2014 when the wreck of the HMS Erebus was finally located still intact by Parks Canada's underwater archaeologists eleven meters underwater near King William Island (see Gopnik 2014 and Solomon and Boyer 2014).

[50] For further discussion of the development of nature and wilderness writing in Canada and its role in the myth of the "True North Strong and Free," see R. Shields 1991, 183.

The North Frye refers to is not the Arctic, but the Laurentian Shield in central/northern Ontario (Grace 2001, 32). Frye, like most Ontarians, has no strong sense of provincial attachment, and his writing tends to project southern Ontario as representative of the whole of Canada. One of Frye's former students, internationally renowned Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, has also been highly influential in articulating the idea of North in Canadian culture and literature. Atwood published her groundbreaking thematic guide to Canadian literature, *Survival*, in 1972, claiming that survival (often against nature and/or the North) and victimization had been up to that point one of the main themes of Canadian literature (Atwood 1972). Atwood's 1995 collection of essays *Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature* is a comprehensive appraisal of the menacing nature of the North in the Canadian imagination and its literature. According to Atwood, North is a state of mind and can differ from person to person, a "place with shifting boundaries" (Atwood 1995, 8). Through a study of Atwood's various fiction[51] and non-fiction[52] texts on the North, one can determine that her definition of North is rather flexible. Atwood has lived most of her life in central Canada, and thus the boreal forests of Ontario and Quebec are featured prominently in her writing.[53] Atwood's North is a dangerous place, and she summarizes the often violent, deadly and bloody accounts of North in Canadian literature thus: "Canadians are fond of a good disaster, especially if it has ice, water, or snow in it. You thought the national flag was about a leaf, didn't you? Look harder. It's where someone got axed in the snow" (Atwood 1995, 11–12). Grace, however, claims that Atwood's representations of North are more complex than they might first appear: "Atwood's North is much more than malevolent; it is parodic, tricky, alluring, hungry, inescapably part of who we are as Canadians, and fun" (Grace 2001, 35).

Atwood's *Strange Things* outlines four main themes which can be repeatedly observed in Canadian Literature on the North: first, the North as a "femme fatale who entices and hypnotizes male protagonists and leads them to their doom" (Atwood 1995, 3) as exemplified by the Franklin expedition; second, the northern wilderness as pure and undefiled, a source of salvation (and the projection of Aboriginal peoples as wise guides on that quest); third, the

[51] The North is represented in several examples of Margaret Atwood's poetry and fiction including *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), *Surfacing* (1972), the short story collection *Wilderness Tips* (1991), and *Cat ô s Eye* (1990 [1988]).

[52] Besides *Strange Things*, see *Survival* (1972) and the short texts "True North" (2005c), "To Beechy Island" (2005b), and the Introduction to *Frozen In Time: The Fate of the Franklin Expedition* (2005a).

[53] Atwood does also deal with the Far North in her repeated encounters with the voyage of Sir John Franklin (see the short story "The Age of Lead" in *Wilderness Tips* and in *Strange Things*) as well as Labrador in the short story "The Labrador Fiasco," also in *Wilderness Tips*.

Wendigo, a cannibalistic snow monster of the boreal forest who often appears in Canadian literature and folklore; and fourth, Atwood discusses the gendering of the North.[54] A decade before Atwood, Allison Mitcham had investigated "the psychological implications of the conflicts posed by the North" in fiction, arguing that "[m]ost of the dominant and recurring themes in contemporary Canadian fiction indeed – particularly flights, isolation and violence – are played out most successfully in the northern wilderness setting" (Mitcham 1983, 10).

The discourse of North has been significant in the writing of many other English Canadian authors; some of the most noteworthy examples are Robert Kroetsch (*But We Are Exiles*, 1965; *The Man from the Creeks*, 1998), Aritha van Herk (*Places Far From Ellesmere*, 1990), Rudy Wiebe (*Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*, 2003 [1989]; *A Discovery of Strangers*, 1994) and Elizabeth Hay, who has represented the North significantly in all of her novels and early prose dating from *Crossing the Snow Line* (1989), *The Only Snow in Havana* (Hay 1992), *A Student of Weather* (2001), through to her Giller Prize-winning *Late Nights on Air* (2007). In addition to Grace (2001), Rosenthal has written about the current "artistic renaissance" (Rosenthal 2005, 284) the North is experiencing in the writing of contemporary southern English Canadian authors (2005) and Inuit perceptions of North (2004). She explains that in postmodern Canadian literature "the North became an experimental space, a blank page for playful investigations of identity, language, and gender but also for rewriting earlier inscriptions of North, and for questioning concepts such as historiography, truth, or authenticity" (Rosenthal 2009, 28).

This sketch of the idea of North in English Canadian literature gives an overview of important scholars and authors as well as common themes and figures in traditional conceptions of North as a remote wilderness, set usually in the Arctic or the Boreal forest of the Canadian shield, at its southernmost reaches in Atwood's fiction, for example, in Ontario cottage country. I now turn to further explore the concept of seasonal nordicity as we journey into the heart of urban Canada.

2.4 Seasonal Nordicity: The North in the City

There are bound to be similarities between the symbols and motifs used to represent the North in English Canadian and Québécois fiction because "the North is determined by multidisciplinary, universal references" but "it is also depicted in contexts familiar to each

[54] For further studies of the gendering of the North, or north-south dichotomies, see Davidson 2005, 9 and Chartier 2008c.

culture and in historical frameworks specific to them" (Chartier 2006, 36). The North is in fact multicultural, including all of the cultures of the circumpolar world, and has at the same time universal elements of identification (such as snow, cold, the colors blue and white, silence, solitude, a frozen and unchanging world, inaccessibility and remoteness in a world without landmarks) as well as strong national symbols that are unique to each culture (Chartier 2008a, 239). Perhaps the most significant difference between the understanding of the North in Quebec and English Canada is the extent to which the concept of nordicity has become embedded in Québécois culture today, and the belief that essentially the entire area of the province of Quebec is "North" as a result of what Hamelin calls seasonal nordicity or winterity.[55]

In chapter 2.1.1 I introduced Louis-Edmond Hamelin's index for determining nordicity, which is so flexible that "a snow storm in an urban area can temporarily 'northify' a location" (Chartier 2007c, 43). In simple terms, seasonal nordicity is the state of winter occurring in a place that does not have cold or snow all year round. Although it may seem straightforward, it is worthwhile to see how Hamelin "defines 'winter' ñ the state of which is referred to as 'winterity' or 'seasonal nordicity' ñ as a 'cold, snow- and ice-producing phenomenon of the water-land-atmosphere interface, which varies with the weather, place, day and year, and is influenced by the world of the imagination, the hea[l]th of individuals, seasonal technology, sports, public services and social pressure'" (Chartier 2010, 33). This interdisciplinary definition thus shows that winter not only influences the "world of the imagination" but is also influenced *by* it. Hamelin argues that the state of North, both natural and mental, also affects southern latitudes referred to by geographers as temperate zones, thus "ainsi s'arriment des mots jadis complètement opposés, ceux d'*urbanité* et de *nordicité*"[56] (Hamelin 1996, 253, emphasis in original). The total nordicity of Quebec has been asserted by scholars (see Dumontet 2008, 255), not least because of the climatic reasons I described above in 2.2.1. "Le Québec est un pays absolument nordique et se construit à partir de ses références à l'hiver"[57] (Dumontet 2008, 255).

Thus, contrary to most English Canadians' immediate association of the North with the Arctic or with remote wilderness locales, most Québécois consider where they live, whether in urban or rural areas, to belong to the North. Several of the terms coined by

[55] Both winterity and wintricity have been used as English translations of *hivernité* which is synonymous with seasonal nordicity; I prefer to use winterity.
[56] Translation: "thus, terms which used to be considered completely opposite, that of *urbanity* and *nordicity*, are now tied together."
[57] Translation: "Quebec is an absolutely Nordic country and is constructed based on its references to winter."

Hamelin, such as *nordicité* and *hivernité*, "quickly entered the general language and dictionaries, which is not easy in the case of the French language" (Chartier 2007c, 41) and are now commonly used.[58] In 2005, the popular current affairs magazine *L'Actualité* did a survey of its readers asking them to choose 101 words that best describe Quebec, and *nordicité* was among the top three (Chartier 2007c, 41). This example tellingly reveals how deeply the concept of nordicity is embedded in the popular imagination and how this sense of belonging to the North is a principal component of Québécois identity.

2.4.1 Forbidden City? Urban Areas as a Site of North in English Canadian Literature

As outlined in chapter 2.1, the understanding of North as a system of ideas rather than as a fixed geographic location means that "the North" does not have to remain at latitudinal extremes. Yet the concept of the North descending into large urban centers in southern Canada, such as Montreal, as a result of seasonal nordicity has not been acknowledged in English Canadian literary criticism,[59] where "the North" is more likely to be associated with Canada's Arctic or hinterland than with the urban jungle. In her summary of Canada's ideological association of the Arctic with the frontier, Keskitalo asserts: "Historically, and with effects reaching in to the present day, the frontier myth resulted in a separation of 'wilderness' and 'city'" (Keskitalo, E. Carina H. 2009, 28). While Sherrill Grace, for instance, claims that her idea of North is not limited to a specific geographic location, her work still seems to assume that North is "north of 60," and that it is definitely located far from major Canadian urban centers.[60] Grace explains that the idea of North, through its "set of familiar, compelling stories, a particular rhetoric and […] aesthetic […] stereotypes […] permeates all aspects of our culture […] and encompasses the entire country." Grace goes on to name various physical features of Canada and population centers ("from Labrador to the St Elias Mountains, from Winnipeg to Coppermine" etc.) to indicate "the entire country" but on her list are none of Canada's largest cities or suburban areas (Grace 2001, 15).

Similarly, Margaret Atwood in *Strange Things* asks: "Why is being lost in the frozen North—and going crazy there—still alive and kicking as a Canadian theme, even though most

[58] The English term nordicity is considered a Canadianism, but it is quickly spreading to other Nordic cultures; see Chartier 2007c, 41 and Chartier 2010.
[59] I have introduced this idea previously in Kannenberg 2011, 138 and Kannenberg 2014.
[60] For example: "The *we*, *my*, *us*, or *our* that is tacitly assumed as authoritative speaker or attentive listener *rarely* lives north of sixty and cannot possibly inhabit North" (Grace 2001, 16); see also her comments in Grace 2001, xvi, 15–17 and in Grace 2009, 17, 38, 53-4.

Canadians now live in cities?" (Atwood 1995, 3). Atwood thus clearly delineates the North as distinct from urban life. Rob Shields also articulates this division between the North and the urban: "The ideological 'True North' is an empty page onto which can be projected images of the essence of 'Canadian-ness' and also images to define one's urban existence against" (R. Shields 1991, 165). Shields goes on to make the case for the binary opposition of the city and the North, locating the North on the "margins" of Canada:

> The Canadian North, by contrast, forms the mythic 'heartland' of Canada but remains a zone of Otherness in the spatial system of Canadian culture. The North is the *complete antithesis* of the urban civilisation of the southern metropolises. Thus it is that places on the margins expose the central role of 'spatialisation' to cultures and nation-states. (R. Shields 1991, 4)

Allison Mitcham, for her part, reinforces the vile city vs. pure North dichotomy. She wistfully states that some people will unfortunately never travel to the North. "Only in their imaginations, in recurring and sustaining fantasies of a cold pure land at the top of the world do they escape from the urban noise and squalor in which they are trapped" (Mitcham 1983, 17).

In their introduction to *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities* (2005a), Douglas Ivison and Justin D. Edwards bemoan the focus of Canadian literary criticism on small towns and "Canada's ultimate site of wilderness, the North" (Ivison and Edwards 2005, 7), asserting that the urban experience is much more a part of the average Canadian's life in the twenty-first century and positioning nordicity in diametric opposition to the city. In their epilogue to the collection of critical essays, editors Edwards and Ivison acknowledge that "the wilderness is no longer categorically placed 'outside' the city, nor is the city emphatically removed from the wilderness" (Edwards and Ivison 2005b, 208). However, they seem to still hold that a new focus on the urban in Canadian literature totally negates any emphasis on nordicity as fundamental to the Canadian experience:

> This constitutes a radical disruption of the spatial ordering of Canada, a reterritorialization of Canadian space which defies measures to repress and contain the city by pushing it to the margins. The incorporation of city and wilderness eradicates the mythic domain and the cultural logic of Canadian space, unsettling the ordered zoning of discrete spaces seen on the transparent mapping of nordicity. (Edwards and Ivison 2005b, 208)

I agree with Edwards and Ivison that traditional views of Canadian space must be unsettled, yet I do so by arguing that nordicity can and does co-exist with the city, in both English Canadian and Québécois literature. Until now, scholars of English Canadian literature have neglected the concept of seasonal nordicity in urban areas. The city has never truly been considered as being part of the North and its literary imagination, although the idea of North *can* be found in English Canadian urban fiction. Toronto novels such as Carol Shields's *Unless* (2002), Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005), and *Consolation* (2006) by Michael Redhill spring readily to mind as merely a few examples, however they have not yet been considered as literature on the North in English Canadian criticism. It should be noted, however, that the role that winter in the city has in English Canadian urban fiction tends to be less prominent than in Montreal novels and short stories, where winter often takes on the qualities of being almost a character in the narrative and plays a decisive role in the action, as I will explore further in my textual analyses in chapters 4 through 6.

2.4.2 Winter and Quebec Literature

It could be argued that for English Canada "the North" is of primary importance to the cultural imaginary, whereas for Quebec it is "the winter" (Morissonneau 2001, 77). Chartier agrees to an extent, but insists that both nordicity and winterity are present in and of imaginative significance to Quebec. It is easy to combine or confuse the two, but there are slight distinctions: Winter is a temporary (and cyclical) state of North in a specific place. Winter is a felt, experienced reality, whereas the North can be more abstract. Chartier notes that Québécois culture in fact exists in the tension between "cultural nordicity" (the state and the representation of a Nordic place) and "cultural winterity" (the state and the representation of a wintry place) (Chartier 2011a). The importance that the winter plays in shaping Québécois identity and culture is currently being recognized in all kinds of media, such as the intelligent and irreverent Montreal cultural magazine *Urbania*, whose Spring 2012 issue is completely dedicated to *l'hiver québécois*. The editorial team gives the following explanation of their seemingly foolhardy choice to celebrate winter in their March edition, when readers are surely longing for spring:

> En tant que magazine québécois, il était plus que temps qu'on consacre un numéro à cet élément-phare de notre identité collective. […] L'hiver, c'est plus que des dates sur un calendrier, c'est un état d'âme. […] Dans cette édition, on a donc décidé de

> célébrer l'hiver, oui, mais aussi de se célébrer en tant que peuple, en réfléchissant à tout ce qui compose notre nordicité. (Lamarre 2012, 2)[61]

In Quebec, seasonal nordicity is a significant part of the national consciousness, and Montreal in particular is an accepted and well-known location of nordicity during the winters, both in the popular cultural imagination and in literature. Despite hot, humid summers, Montreal's frigid winters are notorious and the city receives more snowfall than some Arctic locales. A great deal has been made of Quebec's relatively southern latitude yet comparatively cold winter climate.[62] Élise Lassonde's essay "Winter in the City," which accompanies a small book of Antoine Rouleau's photography of winter scenes in Montreal, entitled simply *Hiver*, shows the significance of winter for both the collective and individual experience:

> While winter is not unfailingly loved by the city dwellers who experience it, the season is certainly one of beauty. Winter, with all its contradictions, affects an entire population, perhaps even more so in the city because it is experienced individually and collectively there; it acts as a symbol of persistence and tenacity, and contributes to defining the identity of a people. (Lassonde and Rouleau 2009, 10)

Winter has truly defined the identity of the Québécois, who identify with Gilles Vigneault's anthem "Mon Pays," as I established above in chapter 2.3.1. Yet winter is, of course, not all positive—a considerable part of both the Québécois and English Canadian relationship with winter are the general complaints about it (too long, too cold, too dirty) as well as the popularity of flying south to Florida or the Caribbean in the dead of winter for a sun-soaked vacation (see an instance of this represented in, for example, Alix Ohlin's *Inside*, discussed in chapter 4). The presence of the North in the city has been a factor in Quebec literature ever since fiction left the terroir with the first urban novels, Roger Lemelin's *Au*

[61] Translation: "As a Québécois magazine, it was high time that we dedicated an edition to this seminal element of our collective identity. […] Winter is more than dates on a calendar; it is a frame of mind. […] In this edition, we have thus decided to celebrate the winter, yes, but also to celebrate ourselves as a people by reflecting on everything that comprises our nordicity." This fascinating and often hilarious magazine taking the pulse of current cultural trends in Quebec can be accessed online at www.urbania.ca. The cover of the edition *Hiver Québécois* features a naked man doing yoga in the snow. The editors explain that it is not easy to illustrate the complex relationship that the Québécois have with winter, and after much deliberation they settled on a photo of Florent Cousineau, a man whom they had previously interviewed and who claims to enjoy using his snowblower naked to "express his nordicity" (Lamarre 2012, 2).

[62] See, for example, *V i v r e l ô h i* (Gazelais 2009), a coffee table book which repeatedly and proudly stresses Quebec's low latitude, compared with Western Europe, but much colder climate. The book offers a survey of the presence and importance of winter in Quebec folklore, history, sports, popular culture, architecture, literature, foods, and films.

pied de la pente douce (1944) and Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945).[63] Chartier explains that seasonal nordicity

> brings the issues dealt with permanently in the far North into territories farther south. This brings the challenges associated with the northern climate to interrupt the narrative with a physical challenge, which is meant to be an inner test. Thus, winter opens up the possibility of the sacred, of rites of passage, on the human landscape: man thinks he is confronting nature, but quickly realises that the only true confrontation is within himself. Here all space – and no particular landscape – is dominated by winter and its constraints. (Chartier 2006, 38)

In my text corpus I will demonstrate that in twenty-first century Montreal fiction, the conflict is generally a psychological confrontation between man/woman and him/herself, in which the winter's cold, ice, and snow facilitate reconciliation.

2.4.2.1 Winter as Unifying Factor in Quebec Society

Beginning in 1910 and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, immigrants from France used nordicity to situate the narrative frame of their works in a context that is resolutely Québécois, using the cold winter setting to underline the very different Québécois context in which they were now writing (Chartier 2008a, 242), for instance Louis Hémon (an immigrant from Brittany) and his 1916 masterpiece *Maria Chapdelaine*.

> Historiquement, toute culture américaine a fini par trouver une voie pour établir une différenciation vis-à-vis de la culture européenne avec laquelle elle partage une même langue. […] Le Québec, qui se définit d'abord comme une culture nord-américaine et de langue française, porte d'importantes traces de constituantes nordique et hivernale qui, si elles n'ont pas toujours été mises explicitement en avant, se manifestent toutefois vigoureusement dans la littérature, le cinéma, les arts visuels, la chanson, ainsi que la culture populaire et la publicité. (Chartier 2008b, 89)[64]

Yet the North has not been primarily celebrated in order to distance Québécois culture from France (Quebec has had an estranged relationship with France since 1759 in any case), rather

[63] Further discussion of the development of urban fiction in Quebec can be found in chapter 3.3 of this study.

[64] Translation: "Historically, each North American culture eventually found a way to establish a differentiation with respect to the European culture with which it shares a language. […] Quebec, which defines itself first of all as a North American culture of French language, has important traces of Nordic and winter constituents, which, even if they have not always been explicitly put forward, vigorously manifest themselves in literature, cinema, visual arts, song, as well as popular culture and publicity."

nordicité is a unifying factor for all of the different ethnic groups found within the territory of Quebec:

> For Quebec, considerations of the North are bound up with the need not so much to differentiate itself from other cultures, but to define a new unifying symbol of identity acceptable to the Inuit, First Nations, French-speaking majority and immigrants, who see the cold, snow and winter as symbols of a collective challenge and experience. (Chartier 2006, 34)

Seasonal nordicity in Quebec appears in many literary forms, from the nationalist writing of the Quiet Revolution to that of immigrants in the twenty-first century. Particularly since the birth of the writing known as *écriture migrante* in the early 1980s, writers who have migrated to Quebec, frequently from French- and Spanish-speaking countries with warmer climates, have often written about the North, usually in reference to the city of Montreal which they perceive to be polar (Chartier 2008a, 242). Dany Laferrière, the prolific and prize-winning Quebec author who fled Haiti in 1973 at age twenty-three, chronicles his own first year in Montreal in *Chronique de la dérive douce* (2012 [1994]), discussed in chapter 3.3.3. Wandering the city, getting to know the rhythms and habits of this white populace, the protagonist insists on the north-south dichotomy of the city, realizing that "Je ne serai pas d'ici tant que je n'aurai pas connu les quatre saisons"[65] (Laferrière 2012 [1994], 22). The fear of the winter season, especially the isolation it brings even in the second-largest francophone metropolis in the world, features heavily in the writing of first-generation immigrants. Yet with the arrival of spring their fear is replaced by a sense of liberation and pride at having overcome this initiation into their new home country (see Chartier 2008a, 243; Dumontet 2008, 249–50). The self-satisfaction and joy found in surviving and even enjoying another harsh winter provides a sense of belonging to people of all ethnic backgrounds. Nordicity is thus a unifying element which diminishes the importance of political, ethnic, and regional differences which make up Quebec. "La nordicité devient ainsi, tout autant que la langue et l'histoire identitaire, un point de convergence et d'enracinement"[66] (Chartier 2008b, 98). Hamelin explains that the winter in the city is becoming defined by its technology, municipal politics, and the attitudes of its citizens.

[65] Translation: "I will not be a local until I have lived through all four seasons."
[66] Translation: "Nordicity thus becomes, as much as language and a shared history, a point of convergence and rootedness."

> À cause du référent humain, l'hiver pourrait donc être pris pour un phénomène *socioclimatique* (socionordique) plutôt qu'uniquement physique. Une telle interprétation conduit à prévoir plus d'intimité et d'harmonie entre la nature hivernale et la société urbaine. De toute façon, par l'application envahissante du vocabulaire strictement nordique à des situations sudistes, c'est tout le territoire québécois qui est en train d'adopter le même langage nordiciste.[67] (Hamelin 1996, 253; emphasis in original)

This provides fertile ground for the analysis of urban fiction in chapters 4 through 6, in which I expose whether Hamelin's prediction for more intimacy and harmony between winter and urban society is reflected in twenty-first century Montreal fiction.

2.4.3 Conclusion: The North ð A Unifying Myth?

The myth of North in Canada could be seen as bringing together English Canadians and Québécois, as both tend to identify their country as a northern nation. Both of these nations have a strong myth of North in their popular cultures, the arts, and in their national "branding." Yet this mythology does not draw on the same cultural referents or historical events in English Canada and Quebec. Although the idea of North/*imaginaire du Nord* is significant to both English Canadian and Québécois culture, the idea of North has not been able to bridge past and present political and cultural divides separating the two nations – their discourses of North have developed alongside one another without necessarily intertwining or uniting. Despite the fact that in both cultures nordicity is used as a means of uniting the multicultural population, in Quebec the *imaginaire du Nord* grew up organically with the settlement of New France, the development of the fur trade, and the popular mythology that grew out of that experience. In English Canada, the idea of North arrived later and seems to have been more of a deliberate creation by political and cultural elites to foster a unifying national myth in order to sustain Canadian nationalism as a point of differentiation from the United States. English Canadian literary criticism up to this point has tended to limit the North to the wilderness, the remote village setting, or the Arctic, to the exclusion of the urban, whereas in Quebec the city in winter is unquestionably a part of the North. I argue that the city should be accepted as a location of North in the English Canadian context as well.

[67] Translation: "Because of the human referent, winter can thus be taken as a *socioclimatic* (socionordic) phenomenon rather than only a physical one. Such an interpretation leads to more intimacy and harmony between winter and urban society. In any case, by the increasing application of strictly northern vocabulary to southern situations, the entire Québécois territory is in the process of adopting the same northern language."

The discourse of the North and winter runs in a transversal manner through the culture and identity of Quebec (Chartier 2008b, 92). The *imaginaire du Nord* draws on Québécois *contes* and legends (such as *La Chasse-Galerie*), literature (e.g. *Maria Chapdelaine*), and film (e.g. *La Guerre des Tuques*, Mélançon 1984. These cultural references are virtually unknown to English Canadians, who look more to historical events such as the unlucky demise of Sir John Franklin and his expedition to the Northwest Passage or the creation of Nunavut in 1999, as well as to the paintings of the Group of Seven, the Robert Service poem "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (1907), or television programs like the CBC's "North of 60" (1992–1998) for their northern inspiration.

The North is often commercialized for financial profit and nation-building aims, for instance in the 2010 and 2014 winter Olympic examples given above, or Molson Canadian beer advertisements.[68] Profiting from the North occurs, of course, in southern Quebec as well ñ take, for example, the appropriation of the polar bear as a symbol for the Boréal brand of beer. Quebec's provincial government under former Premier Jean Charest unveiled its "Plan Nord" in May 2011, an 80-billion dollar investment scheme aimed at developing a huge area of Quebec north of the forty-ninth parallel. With the slogan "Building Northern Quebec Together: The Project of a Generation," Plan Nord promised twenty-thousand jobs per year over twenty-five years.[69] Plan Nord was harshly criticized by those concerned about environmental degradation, Aboriginal rights, and the displacement of communities after the mines are exhausted, yet the current Quebec provincial government of Liberal Premier Philippe Couillard continues to pursue a $1.3-billion revised Plan Nord.

The North is an important and expanding field of literary and cultural studies due to its increasing prominence in the media and the arts. Yet the idea of North also has significant practical applications. As Rob Shields points out, "the 'True North Strong and Free' has empirical effects on patterns of development, economic impacts on its inhabitants, political implications for the nation-state and cultural impacts on Canadian citizens" (R. Shields 1991, 199). Indeed, as debates concerning both climate change and sovereignty in Canada's Arctic (with potential military conflict) heat up, the prominence of the North in the headlines will only increase. Thus the strategic use of the "idea of North" to unite, define, and strengthen

[68] The Molson television commercials began to air in 2000—the first being the famous rant by a character called Joe Canadian, who bases his nationalism on stereotypical ways in which Canadians differ from Americans. Many of the subsequent commercials, which were humorous and popular in English Canada, continued to use the myth of North and the Canadian wilderness to define a sense of the Canadian identity. These ads can be viewed on YouTube.

[69] See article "Charest Unveils $80B Plan for Northern Quebec" (The Canadian Press 2011).

both Canadian and Québécois identity can also be expected to intensify. One can, therefore, anticipate that the North will continue to feature prominently in literature and other art forms as this mythology becomes ever more significant to both the English Canadian and Québécois cultural imaginary. Since the exploration of the *pays d'en haut* in the seventeenth century, Canada's acquisition of the Arctic territories in 1880, and in literature and popular culture today, the North has never lost its timeliness and relevance to the development of Canada.

In the following chapters I will leave the "real" or far North behind, and focus specifically on the manifestation of what Hamelin calls seasonal nordicity or winterity. This study, then, will analyze the effects of winter on social practices and spatiality in Montreal as depicted in fictional discourse. In order to understand the theoretical framework for the analysis of the fiction in chapters 4 through 6, I will first give an overview of the development of urban fiction in Canada and the spatial theories which inform my analyses in chapter 3.

3 Urban Fiction in English Canada and Quebec

Our world is more urbanized today than it has ever been in the history of humankind. Cities are taking on global importance unparalleled since the days of the Roman Empire. We currently find ourselves in the fourth wave of urbanization: the first wave concerned the imperial cities such as Babylon, Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople. Next came the Dark Ages in the Western World, a period during which cities were in decline, although in Eastern cultures they were blossoming. The second wave gave birth to the medieval cities of Paris, Venice, and Milan. The Industrial Revolution brought the third wave of urbanization which saw New York, London, Tokyo, and Berlin swell. The fourth wave, in which we currently find ourselves, is the age of the megacity, the postcolonial city, the global city (see Kotkin 2005). All over the world cities are growing as villagers flock there for work and new opportunities. Canadian journalist Doug Saunders, in his 2011 *Arrival City: The Final Migration and our Next World* presents a dramatic synopsis of global urbanization: "What will be remembered about the twenty-first century [...] is the great, and final, shift of human populations out of rural, agricultural life and into cities. We will end this century as a wholly urban species" (Saunders 2011, 1). In Canada, cities are no less important, indeed they are more influential than ever. Canada's major cities are the powerhouses of the economy, the most important sites of cultural production and innovation, as well as the epicenters of education and intellectual thought. Canadians are moving to the city in increasing numbers; it is often stated that 80 percent of Canadians now live in urban areas. This claim will be discussed and elucidated below.

This chapter gives an overview of the development of urban fiction in both English Canada and Quebec. First, explanations of key terms are clarified: the meaning of "urban area," my use of "urban fiction" rather than "city fiction," as well as the fraught debate surrounding "anglo-québécois literature" and how to classify anglophone Montreal writers. Next, I survey the development of urban fiction in English Canada and then Quebec, explaining why urban literature only developed fairly recently in English Canada despite a majority of Canadians living in urban areas. Then, I focus in on key works in both English and French Montreal fiction that take up seasonal nordicity as a trope.

3.1 Defining the City

What is constituted as a city varies between languages, cultures, and nations. The German and French languages have only terms for city (*Stadt*, *ville*) and village (*Dorf*, *village*), with no

word for the English equivalent which falls between them: town. In order to differentiate, qualifiers of size are used small/klein/petit and so on. In order to determine exactly which cities in Canada we are discussing, and how urbanized the country is, it is necessary to look a little more closely at these terms, which I will do below in 3.1.2. But first, I will discuss the literary terms "city fiction" and "urban fiction" to determine if there is any difference between the two, and why this might matter to the present study, as well as to other literary scholars.

3.1.1 Urban Fiction

Throughout this study, I use the term "urban fiction" following Caroline Rosenthal's argumentation in her 2011 *New York and Toronto Novels after Postmodernism: Explorations of the Urban.* Rosenthal asserts that the genre of "city fiction" should be "restricted to a decisively limited corpus of modernist texts, because it is closely connected to modernist perceptions of the city, to modernist understandings of identity and space, and to modernist modes of representation" (Rosenthal 2011, 1–2). Rosenthal's text corpus of novels from the 2000s has much in common with the novels in this study, and she argues that "for describing contemporary novels that deal with diverse forms and expressions of the urban, the term urban fiction seems to be more appropriate" (2). Indeed, the Montreal fiction examined in later chapters diverges from modernist city fiction as it does not focus on typical modernist motifs, such as skyscrapers and other large monuments in the city to underline its hugeness. Rather, the novels in my text corpus focus in on small, local spaces such as the apartment, cafés, personal office, local school, or the street outside of the characters' homes. Unlike modernist city fiction, in which techniques of defamiliarization were used to shock the reader, twenty-first century Montreal fiction tends towards realism. The narrative techniques of stream of consciousness and fragmentation, so typical of modernism, are not present in my text corpus. Although in Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (chapter 6) there are flashbacks and a few scenes in which the distinction between memories of traumatic events and the present is not clear, there are no incomplete sentences or incoherent passages as modernist writers used. Modernist writers like Morley Callaghan and particularly Ernest Hemingway used short sentences, simple syntax, and did not verbalize emotions or thoughts. This minimalism in form was distinctive of the modernist era, and is not to be found in my text corpus, in which the characters' inner worlds are precisely the focus (see for example Ohlin's *Inside* in chapter 4).

In twenty-first century urban fiction, the city is no longer a new invention; the city is home. The city is a commonplace part of life and no longer alienating. Thus, in medias res beginnings and open endings, use of symbols with no explanation or interpretation to assist the reader, so characteristic of modernist city fiction, are no longer necessary to recreate a modernist sensibility of alienation within the big city. Rather than the modernist focus on hurrying through the city on new forms of transportation (such as street cars and the subway), the characters in my text corpus most often walk the city, meandering its streets in a quest to find themselves, or their place in the city (Ohlin, Thien). As modernist city fiction positioned the individual lost in the crowd, a depersonalized collective, twenty-first century Montreal fiction focuses on the individual in relationships with others: family (Thien), lovers (Ohlin), neighbors (Szalowski), strangers (Proulx) with the winter city space itself. Whereas the pastoral influence and juxtaposition of the city with the rural was set up in binary opposition in modernist city fiction, in my text corpus the city stands alone, sufficient in itself for the narrative with no references to peaceful pastoral or small town imagery. Nature in the city, is of course, present, in that the bitter winter weather lays hold of it and cannot be ignored or escaped just because one is in an urban area. The "wilderness in the city"[70] is most evident in the presence of Montreal's Mount Royal, "the mountain," in Ohlin and Thien's novels (see chapter 4 and 6.2.2, respectively). For Rosenthal, "the city has to be more than the mere setting or backdrop for the plot and its characters in urban fiction" (2). I agree with her assertion. She goes on to argue that the city in urban fiction "must still inform the mode of representation in some way; second, urban space must be a vital means in creating the characters as well as the plot; and third, the specific urban condition in some way must be an underlying discourse of the text" (2). These characteristics are true of my text corpus, as will be further examined in chapters 4 to 6.

3.1.2 Urban Areas

In the nineteenth century, Canadian literature was unquestionably associated with the wilderness or the small town. Rightfully so, as the population of Canada in 1871, for example, was a mere 3.7 million, just 19 percent of whom lived in urban areas. Most literature written in Canada in the nineteenth century dealt with the struggle of European pioneers to establish themselves in a new and often hostile environment. This predominance of the rural ethos in Canadian literature carried on even well into the twentieth century, not keeping pace with the

[70] See discussion of Edwards and Ivison's claim in 2.4.1 that the wilderness and the city cannot coexist.

urbanization of the country. 1921 had marked a watershed for Canadian society. "In that year the census showed for the first time that a majority of Canadians were urban dwellers. The lives and lifestyles of the urban Canadian middle classes were becoming indistinguishable from those of other North American urbanites" (Wright 2004, 42).[71] Since 2001, it has become "commonplace to assert […] that 80 per cent of Canadians live in cities" (Ivison and Edwards 2005, 3). According to the most recent Statistics Canada Census,[72] in 2011 the population of Canada was 33,476,688, with 81 percent of that population living in urban areas (Statistics Canada 2011b). What however, does "urban area" mean exactly?

> Statistics Canada has defined urban areas using the same methodology based on population size and density since the 1971 Census. An urban area was defined as having a population of at least 1,000 and a density of 400 or more people per square kilometre. All territory outside an urban area was defined as rural area. Together, urban and rural areas covered the entire nation. This methodology established a simple urban-rural dichotomy for Canada. (Statistics Canada 2011a)

Thus the urban-rural dichotomy that exists in Canadian literature, has, interestingly, also been codified by Statistics Canada. In the explanation above, it is evident that the oft-repeated claim that Canada is 80 percent urbanized is somewhat inflated when one realizes that this includes Canadians living in small towns of perhaps only a few thousand people. This "imprecision with which terms such as 'urban' and 'city' are used reflects a failure to truly comprehend and engage with the urban," as Douglas Ivison and Justin D. Edwards argue in their Introduction to *Downtown Canada: Writing Canadian Cities* (Ivison and Edwards 2005, 3). They rail against the "looseness with which these terms are used" which "betrays an ignorance about the nature of cities and urbanism as a way of life" (3). In 2011, Statistics Canada replaced the term "urban area" with "population centre," an attempt to delineate between massive differences in the size and density of the "urban areas" in their lexicon. The government agency's explanation of their terms is fascinating in light of this study:

> The term urban is widely used and one that people intuitively understand – a concentration of population at a high density. It is the opposite of rural where population is not concentrated but dispersed at a low density. This intuitive

[71] Note that the census data published on Statistics Canada's website indicates that in 1921, the total population of Canada was 8,800,249, with 4,353,428 living in urban areas (49%) and 4,446,821 (51%) living in rural areas. It is unclear whether this data has been tweaked since Wright published his book, or if the assumption was that at some point later in 1921 the population tipped in the urban direction. By the next census 10 years later, the divide was 54% urban to 46% rural; see Statistics Canada 2011b.

[72] Since 1956, the census has been conducted every five years.

> perspective readily identifies the extremes of what is really a continuum. What is not so intuitive is how to segment the continuum. (Statistics Canada 2011a)

Urbanist Joel Kotkin defines the key elements of what makes a city a city as a place that is "sacred, safe, and busy" (Kotkin 2005, xix), that is, the confluence of religion, commerce, politics, and power. Urban economist Edward Glaeser notes: "Cities are the absence of physical space between people and companies. They are proximity, density, closeness" (Glaeser 2011, 6). In 2011, Statistics Canada thus nuanced their definition by replacing the term "urban areas" with three categories of "population centres:"

> small population centres, with a population of between 1,000 and 29,999;
> medium population centres, with a population of between 30,000 and 99,999;
> large urban population centres, consisting of a population of 100,000 and over.
> (Statistics Canada 2011a)

Thus if we are to discuss what most people would truly define as a large *city*, requiring "an urban way of life," I posit that we should limit ourselves to Statistics Canada's more nuanced 2011 categorization of a large urban population center of 100,000 and over. There were 31 such centers in Canada in 2011; all of them combined having a total population of 20,075,817. Using the large urban population center as our metric, this means that 60 percent of Canada's total population live in large cities, up 1 percent from 2006 (Statistics Canada 2013). This is still more than half of the Canadian population and thus one would expect literature wrestling with urban issues to be popular and frequently produced in Canada. It is also notable that many, if not most, Canadian authors live in large cities, where publishing houses, literary festivals, and universities are located, and where they can rub shoulders on a daily basis with many other cultural creatives (artists, playwrights, musicians, scholars). Thus one would expect them to write literature that is inspired by, or directly describes, their own urban realities.[73] This is becoming more and more the case in twenty-first century Canada—urban fiction is on the rise as will be discussed throughout this chapter. As Statistics Canada rightly states, urbanization is not demarcated by clear-cut extremes but is really a continuum. The oversimplified urban-rural dichotomy has not only characterized the work of Canadian statisticians but also the work of Canadian literary critics.

[73] At a recent public reading and book signing of her latest Montreal novel *Ce qu'il me faut de toi*, Quebec writer Monique Proulx explained that she takes stimuli from the city and goes to the countryside for a "retreat" where she does her writing.

3.2 The Slow Rise of Urban Fiction in English Canada

In the twentieth century, Canadian literary critics focused on the wilderness, rural areas, or small towns as the place where Canadian identity found its home. In 1971, Northrop Frye commented in *The Bush Garden* that "Everything that is central in Canadian writing seems to be marked by the imminence of the natural world" (Frye 1971, 247). It was in his "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada* of 1965 that Frye famously coined the term "garrison mentality" to describe the Canadian psyche as being "a closely knit and beleaguered society" at odds with the vast and hostile geography that surrounds it (1965, 830), as mentioned in chapter 2.3.2. This observation was based on early settler communities, small and isolated, being confronted with the "huge, unthinking, menacing, and formidable physical setting" and of the physical and intellectual garrisons they built to protect themselves from nature. The vastness of Canadian space gave the settlers a feeling of alienation and isolation, unlike their American neighbors' sense of realizing a dream or missionary calling. The small town is a space between the rural and the urban which served as a metaphor for the garrison mentality; an individual can find support in the community but is also confined and constantly under surveillance in small-town society. Novels and short stories about small towns were chosen for the Canadian canon as able to truly capture what it means to be Canadian. Small towns allow for regional and local identity to shine forth, whereas cities have been used as the setting for national identity formation (see Rosenthal 2011, 2-3).

Frye formulated the fundamental question of Canadian identity as not "Who am I?" but "Where is here?" (Frye 1965, 826), launching interminable discussions about Canadian space and place. Frye claimed that "Canadian space is a space without place," which Rosenthal interprets as a lack of a "time-thickened and mythologized narrative that would turn space into a distinct place" (Rosenthal 2011, 14). Frye's writings helped landscape theory to become "especially entrenched" in criticism of Canadian literature (Cavell 2005, 14). Many critics today still argue that there is something fundamentally more Canadian about the small town experience than the multicultural and multilingual crowds pounding the pavement of Canada's largest cities.[74] Ivison and Edwards show that "Canada is an urban country, yet this fact has often been elided from our public discourse, our national mythologies, and critical discussions about Canadian literature and culture" (Ivison and Edwards 2005, 6). They claim that the "privileging of the wilderness and nordicity as defining characteristics of Canadian identity not only fails to recognize the lived experiences of the vast majority of Canadians, but

[74] See Ivison and Edwards 2005, 6–7 for specific examples of scholars and writers asserting this position.

also distances Canadian readers from their literature" (7). Since the turn of the twenty-first century, there has been a renewed and vibrant interest in urban fiction among scholars of Canadian literature, as well as increased production by writers of urban fiction. Ivison and Edwards argue, however, that urban writing in Canada is not a new phenomenon, and that Canadian writers and literary critics need to abandon binaries which equate "the city with exciting new writing and the non-city with tired old myths" but rather "focus on the materiality and specificity of our cities and the experience of urbanism as a way of life in Canada" (12). This I endeavor to do in this study, narrowing in on recent Montreal fiction and examining the lived experiences and daily interactions of urbanites with nordicity.

The preoccupation in Canadian literature in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the wilderness and the small town has led many scholars, such as E. D. Blodgett, to claim that "one of the dominant patterns of the Canadian novel is that of the pastoral" (Blodgett 1982, 154). Yet Rosenthal refutes this notion, asserting that Canadian literature has never had a strong pastoral tradition. "There is a predominance of non-urban places in canonical Canadian literature without […] a distinct pastoral tradition, and this also explains […] why there was a lack of urban fiction in Canada until the twenty-first century" (Rosenthal 2011, 19). Rosenthal explains that the pastoral idyll, a middle ground between wilderness and city, was never truly present in Canadian literature. The American and English pastoral nostalgically idealize the past and a simpler way of life while demonizing the city in the present (18). In the pastoral tradition, the countryside is bucolic and friendly; nature is a place for relaxation and refreshment. In Canadian literature, however, nature has been presented on the one hand as "terrifying and uncanny, and on the other as an escape from and [as an] alternative to the straight-jacket of civilization" (2011, 19–20). Atwood's subtitle of her 1995 collection of essays *Strange Things* names the (generalized) depiction of Canadian nature: *malevolent*. This nature is no pastoral idyll, but rather a place where settlers and urbanites are in danger.

When compared with the United States and French Canada, urban literature developed later in English Canada. Taking the 1921 Canadian census referenced above as the tipping point, I can agree with Ivison and Edwards that "Canada has long been fundamentally urban" (Ivison and Edwards 2005, 10). This thus leads one to wonder: Why Canada did not have a significant, recognized body of urban literature until the late twentieth century? Rosenthal explains several key reasons for this: Canada's colonial position, which deferred to London as the cultural capital, and later cultural domination by the United States; Canadian cities are not "storied cities" in the sense that they have become cultural icons; and the fact that small town

works were selected for the national canon to depict what it means to be Canadian (Rosenthal 2011, 22–23), even though city novels *were* being written as early as the 1940s, as I will demonstrate below. By the time Canadian literature truly formed a canon as a national literature in the 1960s, the "grand modernist narratives of the city had already passed and gone" (Rosenthal 2011, 6). By the 1960s, Canadian cities were an established, routine part of life and no longer exciting and new as they had been in the early twentieth century when British and American writers captured the excitement of modernization and blossoming urbanization, and thus created the "storied cities" of New York, London, and others. Critics argue that because the United States had already symbolically claimed the city as its own space for national myth creation, English Canada had to set itself off as different from the United States in order to have its own international literary identity. Canada has had trouble defining itself as a nation, but has strong traditions of regional writing such as that of the Canadian Prairies, the Maritimes, and the North. The small town "allowed for renditions of a regional and local rather than a national identity" (Rosenthal 2011, 23). As I explain in 2.3.1, the idea of North was used to distinguish Canada from its large and powerful southern neighbor, the United States. Rosenthal clarifies that "as an imaginative space the North exemplified the unstructured and unrealized that Frye had identified as characteristic for Canadianness" (Rosenthal 2011, 21). She goes on to call the North a "placeless space" in Canadian literature, "a projection space for southern Canadian fantasies" (Rosenthal 2011, 21). I argue that by bringing the North to the southern city, it becomes a placed space, integrally involved in Canada's lived, everyday urban places (see Chapter 1.3.1).

3.3 The City in Quebec Literature

As I outline in chapter 2.2, French Canadian literature began with travel narratives, *contes*, and legends depicting the harsh realities of rural life in the French colony of Nouvelle France in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Quebec fiction of the *terroir* was dominant until the 1940s (see also chapter 2.4.2). The novel *Trente Arpents* by Ringuet in 1938 marked the end of regionalism, and the announcement of urban culture was symbolized in the publication of the novel *Bonheur d'occasion* by Gabrielle Roy in 1945 (Chartier 2001, 172) which will be discussed below.

In early French Canadian literature, the city had been demonized as being in opposition to Catholic, rural, and French values which were tied to the land. A dichotomy of evil city versus good countryside (Morissonneau 1978, 185) existed in Quebec literature, and

the city space was associated with the wealthy, English oppressor. "La ville est le lieu de l'autre (surtout de l'autre anglophone), de l'exploitation et de l'aliénation du francophone, de sa perdition matérielle, morale et spirituelle" (Eibl 2009, 149–50).[75] In the 1940s and 50s, the first modern writers such as Roy, Anne Hébert, Yves Thériault, and Alain Grandbois depicted "unromanticized portraits of the reality of Quebec life cut off from its cultural roots" in the city (Cohen and Grady 1996, ix). *Contes* and *nouvelles* (short prose narratives), a popular and prolific genre in Quebec literature throughout the twentieth century and still today, are often highly focused on the everyday realities of urban life. "Despite its self-referential nature, contemporary Quebec short fiction is−like most short fiction everywhere−about people living their lives in the midst of urban, technologically determined environments that have reduced non-urban environments to faceless, characterless suburbs" (xi). Cohen and Grady posit that intertextual references in Quebec short fiction to its own literary past "is an element that distinguishes Quebec short fiction from that produced in other parts of Canada−which seems almost unconscious of its historical antecedents and instead eagerly claims kinship with British, American, and even South American writing" (xi).

The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, when Quebec society was secularized and traditional discourses were abandoned, brought an end to the urban/rural dichotomy. The city was now "perceived as a living space, admitting plurality and offering equal opportunities to the francophone population" (Rosenthal and Eibl 2009, 11). Urban fiction in Quebec was not birthed out of a comparison with English Canada because indeed up until the 1970s, when English Canada suddenly took great interest in Quebec due to the sovereignty movement, there was little interaction between the two literatures. Very few literary critics took up comparative projects between the two literatures and they developed parallel to each other, as I outlined in chapter 1.1, referencing Philip Stratford, one of the foundational figures of comparative literature in Canada. "Indeed, together with the phenomenon of parallel growth one must also register the fact that the two literatures have developed quite independently and that there has been little direct sharing of experience between the two literary communities" (Stratford 1986, 3). Only in the 1980s did an increasingly bilingual reading public emerged (see chapter 1.1). Referring to Northrop Frye's observation in 1976 that Quebec's new sense of identity over the preceding fifteen years was the decisive cultural event in English Canada, Stratford explains that "it is in just such a way that parallel lines determine each other" (Stratford 1986, 6). I argue, thus, that any influence between English Canadian and Québécois

[75] Translation: "The city is the place of the Other (especially the anglophone Other), of exploitation and of alienation of the francophone, of his material, moral, and spiritual perdition."

literature is indeed subtle and only began to take place in the 1970s. As urban fiction was clearly present in Quebec since the 1940s as the Québécois population began to leave their farms in droves and flocked to the cities.[76] I would argue that the development of urban fiction in Quebec had more to do with political, economic, and religious changes happening inside Quebec and the appropriation of urban space by francophones rather than a need to differentiate itself from English Canadian literature.

After this brief overview of the development of the city in English Canadian and Québécois literature, I now turn to Montreal fiction, and more specifically, particular authors and their works of fiction that have had a determining effect on the urban literary landscape. I will demonstrate that seasonal nordicity has been present and significant in Montreal fiction in both English and French since its inception.

3.3.1 The Anglo Question: Anglo-Québécois Fiction and the Nomenclature Debate

At this juncture one might wonder where to situate the two Montreal novels written in English in this study, Alix Ohlin's *Inside* and Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*, in light of recent debates surrounding the fraught nomenclature "anglo-québécois literature." Writing in English in Quebec is not a new phenomenon, with its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s in Montreal, a period when William Weintraub claims that the best literature in all of Canada was being produced in Montreal: "In the 1940s and '50s, the best novels that had ever been written in Canada were being written by Montreal authors. The best short stories were also coming from a Montreal writer and the best poetry from Montreal poets" (Weintraub 1996, 203). Weintraub elucidates the economic and political culture of Montreal at the time:

> The year 1939 would usher in two decades of prosperity, growth and a flowering of the arts. Montreal would begin to think of itself as a city unique in the world−bilingual, cosmopolitan, exceedingly handsome and wonderfully odd. At the same time, these would be decades darkened by the repressive Quebec government of Premier Duplessis. The authoritarian fog engendered by Duplessis would dissipate only after his death in 1959, the year that marked the end of this era. (Weintraub 1996, 3)

[76] Note that though I agree with Rosenthal's analyses in many other points in the current study, I disagree with her statement that "the literature of Quebec has developed a very distinct and strong tradition of city fiction since the 1960s, because Quebec had an additional need to intra-nationally differentiate itself from Anglo-Canada, while Anglo-Canada defined itself internationally against the United States, which had already symbolically claimed the city" (Rosenthal 2011, 24).

Linda Leith agrees that the "fiction of English Canada came of age in the Quebec of the 1940s" (Leith 1990b, 2), beginning with Hugh MacLennan's 1941 *Barometer Rising* and his influential *Two Solitudes* (1945). Speaking of Hugh MacLennan's sensation, Weintraub notes "People in London, Paris and New York were accustomed to recognizing their cities in novels, but in Montreal this was something new" (Weintraub 1996, 205). *Two Solitudes* took on the rural/urban dichotomy and the political, cultural, religious, and linguistic tensions in Quebec at the time, turning some assumptions on their heads. MacLennan's novel calls forth *place* out of *space* by naming and identifying Montreal and its particularities (see chapter 1.3.1), essentially putting Montreal on the map, as Leith underlines:

> MacLennan's attempt in *Two Solitudes* is no less than to make Canada known to the world, to create Canada. His unapologetic focus on Canadian settings and issues was new in the 1940s, and its importance should not be underestimated. Writers play a largely unacknowledged role in their articulation of issues of social import and simply in naming places and problems–in applying words to the situation that people find themselves in at a specific time and in a specific place. (Leith 1990a, 14)

In 1944, Gwethalyn Graham's bestselling and controversial[77] Montreal novel *Earth and High Heaven* was published, the first Canadian novel to make it to the top of the *New York Times* Best Seller list. Other well-known writers such as Morley Callaghan, A. M. Klein, Louis Dudek, F. R. Scott, Irving Layton, Mavis Gallant, Mordecai Richler, and Leonard Cohen were all living and writing in Montreal in the 1940s and 50s, although no designations such as "anglo-Québécois" or "anglo-Montrealer" were then assigned to them: they were simply some of the best *Canadian* writers at the time. Most of these writers portrayed Montreal as an English-speaking city where the role of the francophone population was relegated to that of a spectator. Weintraub explains that the evocation "of the French" was limited to vignettes about corrupt politics, poverty, and prostitutes in the red light district. MacLennan and Cohen gave a bit more presence to francophones in their writing, while Mavis Gallant was a real exception at the time (Leclerc and Simon 2005, 15–16). In a 1987 interview with Leith, Mavis Gallant tells her that MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* and Graham's *Earth and High Heaven* had a great influence on her own writing. "Gallant knows her French-Canadian characters intimately–there is no comparison between her and MacLennan here–and her fictional accounts of French-English relations […] are far more sophisticated than MacLennan's, but

[77] The novel portrays an interfaith romance between a Jewish man and a Protestant Montreal woman.

they could not have been written as she wrote them if she had never read *Two Solitudes*" (Leith 1990a, 14).

Starting in the late 1960s, "English writers of Quebec subsequently dropped almost entirely out of sight on the English Canadian literary horizon" (Leith 1990a, 3). Leith explains that the English Canadian literary powers have overlooked writers in English from Quebec from the 1960s-80s in the process of canonization, but also that "the decline in the perceived importance of English writers from Quebec […] has gone hand in hand with the demographic, economic, and political decline in the importance of English Quebec" (Leith 1990a, 6). The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s and nationalist/separatist movement in Quebec isolated writers in English in the province from both English Canadian writers elsewhere and the francophone literary scene: "the accepted marker for the beginning of the minoritization of English in Quebec was the first election of the Parti Québécois in 1976" (Reid 2009, 63).

There has been a debate among scholars about what nomenclature to assign to writing from Quebec in English. In Leith's "Quebec Fiction in English during the 1980s: A Case Study in Marginality," originally published in *Québec Studies* in 1989, she explains the problematical "question of what to call the Quebec writers who write in English" (Leith 1990b, 15). When using the term "English," I too am referring to the English language as language of expression rather than any cultural or ethnic ties to Englishness, as many writers in English are of diverse ethnic origins. Many of the authors Leith interviewed in the 1980s rejected the term "anglophone" for various reasons such as being too bureaucratic, while a few "relish" the term as it "reeks with the peculiarity and particularity of being here" (Leith 1990b, 16). Since the mid-1990s the terms "anglo-québécois literature" and "anglo-québécois writer" have been suggested, laid claim to, and repudiated. Scholars such as Linda Leith, Marco Micone, Catherine Leclerc, Sherry Simon, Lianne Moyes, and Simon Harel have argued for the inclusion of anglophone Quebec writing in the canon of Québécois literature (see Leclerc and Simon 2005; Leclerc 2007; Harel 2007; Moyes 2007).

Gilles Marcotte has controversially claimed that anglo-québécois literature does not exist because franco-québécois literature does not exist. The comment was made in an essay entitled "Neil Bissoondath disait…" written for a 1997 roundtable discussion on anglophone writing in Quebec. The essay was intentionally provocative, explains Lianne Moyes, an expert in anglophone Quebec literature who co-organized the conference (Moyes 2007). "In

Marcotte's view, [Neil] Bissoondath[78] is not a Québécois writer, just as Hugh MacLennan, Clark Blaise, Frank Scott, Mordecai Richler, David Solway, A. M. Klein, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, and D. G. Jones are not Québécois writers because Québécois literature is, in the first place, by definition, French" (Reid 2009, 61). Marcotte prefers the designation "la literature canadienne-anglaise," that is, English Canadian literature, for writing in English from Quebec (Moyes 2007, 5). Moyes charts the increase in research on anglo-Quebec literature among francophone scholars, especially since the conference in 1997, in her article "Conflict in Contiguity: An Update," which serves as an English introduction to a dossier of the journal *Québec Studies* from Winter 2007/Spring 2008 entitled *Textes, territoires, traduction: (dé)localisations/dislocations de la littérature anglo-québécoise*.[79] The position papers in French by Quebec scholars and writers were first delivered at a conference in 2006, meant to follow up on the 1997 conference and explore current reception of contemporary anglo-Québec literature. Catherine Leclerc argues for the term "*littérature anglo-québécoise*" rather than "*anglo-montréalaise*," pointing out that "if Quebec literature defines itself territorially, it needs to take into account all of the literatures produced in that territory; if French-language writing from Montreal is understood as Québec literature, so might English-language writing be;" she is thus a proponent of the inclusion of English texts within the framework of "*la littérature québécoise*" (Moyes 2007, 6).

In his comprehensive article "Is There an Anglo-Québécois Literature?"[80] Gregory J. Reid traces the history of writing in English published in Quebec, as well as the debate among literary scholars around the terminology of how to define, describe, and classify this literature. Reid does not really answer his own question, but opaquely insists: "At issue in the question 'Is there an Anglo-Québécois literature?' is what the question 'does' as much as what it 'means.' The most significant response to the question, then, lies not in an answer but, more widely, in what happens when the question is asked" (Reid 2009, 58). Thus Reid's goal is primarily to get anglophone Quebec writers read, studied, and discussed. According to Reid,

[78] Bissoondath, born in Trinidad and Tobago, has lived in Quebec City since 1995, teaches creative writing at Université Laval, and publishes in English. He has been openly critical of Canadian multiculturalism policy, especially in *Selling Illusions: The Cult of Multiculturalism in Canada*, (2002 [1994]).

[79] Moyes notes an increase in "prominent Francophone scholars" studying anglo-Quebec literature in recent years, compared with the mid-1990s, when "there were very few Francophones researching English-language writing" (Moyes 2007, 1). Conference organizers were aware "that in spite of scholarly interest in writing in English in Québec, the category of 'littérature anglo-québécoise' continued to be controversial" (4). Moyes does note, however, that although the number of French-speaking academics interested in anglophone Quebec literature has increased over the past decade, "the number of scholars involved is relatively limited" (1).

[80] A footnote at the end of Reid's article, published in *Essays on Canadian Writing* in Fall 2009, notes that the article was written in 2002, submitted in 2003, and accepted for publication in 2004 but not published until 2009. Thus Reid was writing about anglophone Quebec literature up to 2002; see Reid 2009, 84.

the "historical moment" of Anglo-Québécois literature, "that is, a period of well-established iconography together with growing skepticism [*sic*] and semiotic daring—would extend from the premiere of David Fennario's *Balconville* in 1979 to the publication of Neil Bissoondath's novel *Doing the Heart Good* in 2002." Reid explains that in this period of intense debate in Quebec about nation, identity, and language, "conditions for the creation of an Anglo-Québécois literature reached their apogee" (Reid 2009, 62). He reminds us, logically, that "the signifier 'Anglo-Québécois' cannot predate the term 'Québécois,' which emerged in the 1960s and became the accepted appellation for residents of the province (as opposed to Quebec City) only in the 1970s" (Reid 2009, 63).

However, even the term "la littérature québécoise" in French is not easily agreed upon or defined, as Rosemary Chapman devotes a monograph to studying.[81] Chapman does not directly address anglophone writing from within Quebec in her study, as her focus is on francophone writing and how the literary history of francophone Canada has been told. Chapman notes that the *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, by Michel Biron, Francois Dumont, and Élisabeth Nardout-Lafarge (2007), does have a section on "la littérature anglo-québécoise," but that the authors generally "understand 'la littérature québécoise' to refer to French-language literature from Quebec" dating retroactively back to the first writings of New France, although the term "québécois" did not come into common usage until the 1960s Quiet Revolution (Chapman 2013, 56).

Although Reid's article was not published until 2009, he acknowledges that when he wrote it in 2002, "present times seem to be propitious for the acknowledgment of an Anglo-Québécois literature, among younger Anglo-Québécois writers there has been a sharp backlash against the 'Anglo-rights' movement and, consequently, resistance to being identified as anything 'Anglo'" (Reid 2009, 64–65). Reid goes on to examine six novels from the 1990s, when "English Quebec writing had become intensely focused on the home scene" (Reid 2009, 70), written by Quebec anglophones who are also bilingual. These writers all live in Quebec and feature English-speaking characters living in post-1976 Quebec (the year marks the election of the first Parti Québécois separatist government). The Montreal novels in English in my study, written more than a decade following Reid's novels, differ significantly.

[81] Rosemary Chapman, in her 2013 study *What is Québécois Literature?* uses the term "francophone writing in Canada," claiming that "*la littérature québécoise*" refers specifically to the context of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s. Chapman admits her chosen nomenclature is "cumbersome," but claims that "francophone writing in Canada" is "a rather more accurate term to refer to the historical, geographical and generic range of literature written in French in Canada, within and beyond Quebec, by authors mostly but not exclusively of European descent" (Chapman 2013, 1).

Alix Ohlin grew up in Montreal but has lived in the United States since she left to attend Harvard University. Madeleine Thien was born and raised in Vancouver, lived in Quebec City for two years, but "Montreal has been [her] base since late 2006" (M. Thien, pers. comm.). The six novels Reid examines are all "implicated in a process of reterritorialization of language" and treat "what happens to language" in contentious 1990s Quebec. Unlike Ohlin and Thien's novels, Reid's corpus reveals "consistent borrowing from French" (Reid 2009, 70). Ohlin and Thien's novels portray incidents revealing the multilingual daily lives of people living in Montreal; although their main characters speak English (see chapter 4.2.3.3. for a discussion of language groups in Ohlin and chapter 6.4 for Thien). Ohlin's characters have a few small interactions with francophones, in which they speak French. Thus, unlike Reid's 1990s text corpus, the twenty-first century novels I study here do not take up "the reterritorialization of English in Quebec," nor do they focus on binary English-French political or identity issues. In this study, I will not lay claim to the term anglo-québécois literature for the two novels written in English engaging with nordicity in the city of Montreal.[82] I will refer to both novels written in English, along with their francophone counterparts, as Montreal fiction. The novels in my text corpus, regardless of the language of expression or of the protagonists, are preoccupied with the city and the inner lives of their characters, and use seasonal nordicity as an important motif in exploring the relationship between the two. National identity and political debates are not central, or often even mentioned, in twenty-first century Montreal fiction.

Ohlin, herself a border crosser—having grown up in Montreal, studied at Harvard and the Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas at Austin, and currently teaching at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania—rejects assigning herself a national label. In an email exchange in which I asked her if she would consider herself to be "an English-Canadian author, an Anglo-Quebecker author or something else" or if she would "ascribe to any of these designations" at all, Ohlin kindly responded: "I do not think much about 'English-Canadian' or 'Anglo-Quebecker' as designations per se. I do think that growing up in Canada, and Montreal in particular, has been a major influence on me—and on the language and aesthetics of my work" (A. Ohlin, pers. comm.). I posed the same question to Madeleine Thien, who has only lived in Montreal in recent years. Thien responded:

[82] Helpful discussions of the term, its detractors, proponents, and implications, can be found in Leclerc and Simon 2005; Moyes 2007; and Reid 2009.

> I'm not sure that Montreal has come to feel like home yet partly because, during the writing of *Dogs at the Perimeter*, I was largely in Cambodia, southeast Asia, China and Iowa. And, in the last few years, Berlin, China again, and Vancouver. I probably would not assign any of the names to myself, though I do strongly, strongly think of the novel as Montreal fiction. In terms of myself, I think I've only ever referred to myself as a Canadian writer. (M. Thien, pers. comm.)

Thus, I will follow the authors' own self-designations and call them both Canadian writers, without assigning any other national or identifying nomenclature. For both authors, the *city* of Montreal, the *urban space* trumps national identity discourses.

As Catherine Leclerc and Sherry Simon note, most anglophone writers from Quebec come from the city of Montreal, which serves as the ultimate contact zone between anglophone and francophone cultures in the province. "Contact zones" have been defined by Mary Louise Pratt as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other" (Pratt 1991, 34). The cultures rub off on each other, borrowing words and foods, customs and manners. Not only do anglophones and francophones meet in Montreal, of course, but also the substantial Jewish (and Yiddish speaking) community, but also all of the other ethnic groups who have claimed space in Montreal in the past century. The polyglot city is a hotbed for cultural creatives: designers, writers, architects, artists, intellectuals, and musicians who meet in the contact zone and thus produce better work. Bridge and Watson, in "City Imaginaries," agree: "cities are creative, places that encourage the imagination, sites of stimulation. People with different ideas come together in cities and their webs of interconnection and sharing of knowledge and ideas are productive creatively" (Bridge and Watson 2002, 7).

For anglophone Montreal writers the city is a key theme in their works as they negotiate life in this heterogeneous and plurilingual city. Often such fertile multicultural neighborhoods as Mile End feature in their work, for example that of Mary Soderstrom and Gail Scott, just as it does for francophone authors Monique Proulx and Lise Tremblay (Leclerc and Simon 2005, 28). Contemporary writers from Montreal, in both French and English, are intent on the "interweaving of the global and local dimensions of culture […]. Their intertwining is a sign of a meshing of belongings and of points of meeting which define québécois literature as a contact zone" (Leclerc and Simon 2005, 29). This is clearly evident in both Ohlin and Thien's novels, in which characters travel to and interact with numerous

other countries and cultures,[83] while at the same time being firmly rooted in the lived, urban space of Montreal. Gail Scott is known for her interesting use of Gallicisms in English, reflecting the typically French-influenced English spoken in Montreal. In Scott's contribution to the 2006 roundtable mentioned above, she "says relatively little about Québec here because she wants to free her writing from the confines of any single identity tag and because her sense of citizenship currently has more to do with 'the city-state of Montreal'" (Moyes 2007, 14). These interactions with the Nordic "city-state of Montreal" are the focus of the present study, as writers in both English and French move past national identity and language debates and engage the winter city space.

3.3.2 Seasonal Nordicity in Twentieth Century Anglophone Montreal Fiction

I will now briefly shine a light on two of the anglophone writers of Montreal fiction mentioned above whose work demonstrates seasonal nordicity, Mavis Gallant and Clark Blaise. Both Gallant and Blaise are remarkable for their depiction of Montreal as a contact zone between anglophones and francophones, both are border crossers.

Gallant's anglophone parents sent her across the city to a French boarding school, a remarkable decision for 1940s Montreal. Gallant thus deals more than others of her era with issues of contact between the two languages and cultures, crossing borders within the city, and the experience of feeling both at home and like a foreigner in Montreal. Her semi-autobiographical Linnet Muir stories about a young female in Montreal in the 1930s and 40s, published in the 1970s, show her rare perspective on her life "out of the pond" of either French and Catholic or English and Protestant culture. In *Histoire de la littérature québécoise*, Biron, Dumont, and Nardout-Lafarge recognize Gallant's genius and rare insight into both cultures, being perfectly bilingual. "Peu d'œuvres québécoises, même parmi celles écrites en français, font revivre avec autant de précision et de vérité le Montréal des années 1930 et 1940[84] (Biron, Dumont, and Nardout-Lafarge 2007, 477). Despite Gallant's international success, it was not until the 1980s and 90s that her work was translated into French and

[83] Ohlin's character Tug travels the world working in disaster zones, especially significant is his experience with the Rwandan genocide. Also in *Inside*, Anne lives in New York, Los Angeles, and travels to Edinburgh. In Thien's novel, the protagonists live in Montreal, are deeply impacted by their experience of the Cambodian genocide, and much of the action of the novel takes place in Cambodia and surrounding border regions.

[84] Translation: "Few works of Québécois literature, even among those written in French, make the Montreal of the 1930s and 1940s come alive with such precision and truth."

recognized in Quebec (477). In the story "The Doctor" (1977), Gallant gives her bilingual perspective on Montreal of the era:

> This overlapping in one room of French and English, of Catholic and Protestant−my parents' way of being, and so to me life itself−was as unlikely, as unnatural to the Montreal climate as a school of tropical fish. Only later would I discover that most other people simply floated in mossy little ponds labeled 'French and Catholic' or 'English and Protestant,' never wondering what it might be like to step ashore; or wondering, perhaps, but weighing up the danger. To be out of a pond is to be in unmapped territory. The earth might be flat: you could fall over the edge quite easily. My parents and their friends were, in their way, explorers. They had in common a fear of being bored, which is a fear one can afford to nourish in times of prosperity and peace. (Gallant 1996, 691)

Gallant clarifies the influence of her uniquely Quebec upbringing: "there is no such thing as a Canadian childhood. One's beginnings are regional. Mine are wholly Quebec, English and Protestant, yes, but with a strong current of French and Catholic. My young parents sent me off on that current by placing me in a French convent school, for reasons never made plain." Her border crossing upbringing in the 1940s, the contact between different cultures, languages, and crossing physical urban space to go to school, fed Gallant's talent for writing, just as the modern-day contact zone that is Montreal feeds many more writers:

> It was a singular thing to do and in those days unheard of. It left me with two systems of behavior, divided by syntax and tradition; two environments to consider, one becalmed in a long twilight of nineteenth-century religiosity; two codes of social behavior; much practical experience of the difference between a rule and a moral point. Somewhere in this duality may be the exact point of the beginning of writing. (Gallant 1996, xv)

Seasonal nordicity also marked Gallant's Montreal childhood.

> 'Go out and play in the snow' was a frequent interruption. Parents in bitter climates have a fixed idea about driving children out to be frozen. There was one sunken hour on January afternoons, just before the street lamps were lighted, that was the gray of true wretchedness, as if one's heart and stomach had turned into the same dull, cottony stuff as the sky; it was attached to a feeling of loss, of helpless sadness, unknown to children in other latitudes. (Gallant 1996, 695)

Interestingly, Gallant's rather negative remembrance of being forced to play in the cold and snow stands out in contrast to Claude Jasmin's portrayal in *La petite patrie*, discussed below in chapter 3.3.3.

Clark Blaise, born to Canadian parents in North Dakota and raised in several American locations, lived in Montreal from 1966-1978, and his fiction is marked by border-crossing and autobiographical material. Despite his dual citizenship, he is usually considered an English-Canadian writer. Blaise made an early reputation for himself as one of the Montreal Storytellers, a group of young writers (including Hugh Hood and John Metcalf) who traveled around the Montreal area reading and performing their short fiction in high schools and community centers in the 1970s. He has written fourteen Montreal stories, gathered and republished together in one volume (Blaise 2003). Several of the stories in this volume use seasonal nordicity as an important trope, for example, "Words for the Winter" (1973), originally published in the significant early collection *A North American Education*. It takes place in a poor, immigrant neighbourhood of the city, where isolation, introspection, and self-discovery is brought on by the physical challenge of the North invading the city.

The protagonist and narrator of all three Montreal stories in *A North American Education* is Norman Dyer, a character Blaise had already introduced in "Grids and Doglegs" (1965). Dyer is an American academic lecturing and teaching English as a second language at two Montreal universities. In the first story, "A Class of New Canadians," Dyer is extremely idealistic about integrating into multicultural Montreal; he does not consider himself to be an immigrant and looks down on his students who are. He is cocky and self-satisfied: "He was proud of himself for having steered his life north" (Blaise 1973, 3). Yet by the end of the story he is humbled and starts to realize that he *is* an outsider, an immigrant surrounded by other immigrants.

In "Words for the Winter," he lives with his German wife and young son in a diverse working-class neighborhood. The poorly insulated, vermin-infested flats of Dyer's neighborhood contribute to the suffering inflicted by the cold temperatures. In this neighborhood, surviving the winter is a truly collective experience, drawing the multicultural neighbors closer together than in the summer. Dyer is no longer self-righteous and superior, but stands "with the Greeks and West Indians at the bus stop [...] We stand like cattle in a blizzard, edging closer than we would in summer, smoke and vapour rising through the wool, each of us dreaming of heat and coffee. The Greeks and West Indians must want to die" (27). For Dyer, winter in Montreal is not beautiful or celebrated: "The winters are an agony. In

January our broad summer street narrows to a one-lane rut, an icy *piste de luge* banked by walls of unmovable cars" (27). Dyer explains how to survive the state of seasonal nordicity in Montreal:

> You survive by subtraction. Pick a date: March 15, say. The coldest days bring wind and an arctic sun, much suffering, but one day less. [...] Sometime in January we enter the trough, the two weeks of winter torpor when pipes burst and cars give out and the wind cuts viciously through the flat, rattling under the doors and around the windows [...] The day is reached when the city voluntarily closes down. You cancel classes like everyone else, you eat whatever you find in the fridge [...] Your students hobble to classes on their *après-ski* plaster casts—proud souvenirs of the climate they love. [...] We are in the dentist's chair for another forty days. (Blaise 1973, 27–28)

Dyer now admits to being an outsider: He will never love this climate like his Québécois students. For him, surviving the winter is an agony akin to sitting in the dentist's chair. This is similar to Gallant's portrayal of winter, though hers was not as harsh a condemnation, and stands out in difference to the francophone fiction articulated below.

3.3.3 Seasonal Nordicity in Twentieth Century Francophone Montreal Fiction

In this sub-chapter I will introduce several foundational works of francophone Montreal fiction which have had a significant impact on the urban literature landscape while at the same time incorporating seasonal nordicity as a dominant trope.

As was mentioned above, Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d ô**o**ccasion* was a landmark on the Quebec literary scene as the first urban novel. Mavis Gallant, who in 1945 was a reporter for the *Standard*, a Montreal weekly newspaper, when Roy's novel was published, said that it "was probably the most authentic picture of the working class ever to come out of Canada" (Weintraub 1996, 210). After having read the book in French when it came out, she "was so impressed by it that she persuaded her editor to let her do a picture story about it." Gallant hired actors to reenact scenes from Roy's novel in the gritty, impoverished St. Henri neighborhood. The scenes were photographed and published in the newspaper. "For most English Montrealers, it would be their first glimpse of life in a part of the city that was completely foreign to them, and of a story that was destined to become a classic of Canadian literature" (Weintraub 1996, 210).

Michel Tremblay's *Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*, a series of six novels published between 1978 and 1997, "can be seen as drawing on images of the smaller, introspective village community" within the Plateau neighborhood, "rather than the urban metropolis." *Bonheur d'occasion*, on the other hand, "emphasizes the extent to which the working-class district symbolizes the effects of much more widely based systems of domination and exploitation" (Chapman 2000, 12). Chapman asserts that *Alexandre Chenevert*, the 1954 novel written by Roy, and, "to a lesser extent, *Bonheur d'occasion*, are both structured around the opposition between an urban and a rural environment to which protagonists escape briefly and which is used to explore issues specific to each of the novels" (Chapman 2000, 12). Both novels demonstrate seasonal nordicity: *Alexandre Chenevert* is named after the novel's protagonist who drives a snowplow in Montreal, in which Christmas is drowned out by noise of plows (Chartier 2008b, 93; see Roy 1995 [1954]).

Claude Jasmin's novel *La petite patrie* is an apt example of how literature not only reflects the city, but the city reflects its literature. Gilbert elucidates the intricate relationship of literature to space and culture: "Literary studies are interested not only in how literature reflects such understandings of space−how they operate thematically and at the level of plot and setting−but also in how literature shapes the understanding of space, how it intervenes in culture to produce new understandings" (Gilbert 2009, 105). Published in 1972, Jasmin reflects on his life growing up in a working-class francophone neighborhood in central Montreal in the 1930s-40s, then called Villeray. Their homes were crowded with many children and intergenerational families. Jasmin recounts everyday childhood experiences capturing a slice of Montreal's past that many Québécois could identify with as the novel became an instant success and was turned into a popular television show airing from 1974−1976. Later, the neighborhood Jasmin describes was renamed La Petite-Patrie.[85] Jasmin's novel is divided into four parts for the four seasons, and vividly depicts the children's love of winter, "une vraie saison" (Jasmin 1982, 60), despite their poverty. Jasmin describes playing outside in the back alley with all of the neighboring children for hours in the snow, despite violent cold, and sometimes during blinding snow storms (61). "Personne n'a froid quand le jeu est roi, quand le jeu est une religion! […] Oui, l'hiver était partie importante des merveilles du temps heureux de cette enfance pauvre. Nous étions riches,

[85] It is part of the borough Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie. Another borough named Villeray remains, just north of La Petite Patrie.

riches d'une si belle saison, riches de pouvoir jouer ainsi, malgré le froid" (77).[86] Jasmin's words are an interesting juxtaposition with Gallant's, above, who was raised in a well-to-do family in a wealthy neighborhood and seemed to dislike being forced outside by her parents to play in the cold. For Jasmin, it is the cold and snow that makes him, his numerous siblings, and impoverished comrades, rich.

Wandering the city in winter with no destination is a common trope in Québécois literature, as characters try to lose themselves or escape their memories. Winter modifies the city and major streets become a desert. The snow seems to erase garbage, people, and houses. Régine Robin's nonlinear novel *La Québécoite* (1983), published under the English title *The Wanderer*, was the foundational book of the *écriture migrante* genre rising in 1980s Quebec. Both the author and her unnamed protagonist are Jewish women from France who struggle to fully integrate into Québécois society. Robin's novel had a huge impact on Québécois literature and culture, instigating a rewriting of Quebec literary history, and a reflection on writing involving different languages, places, imaginaries, and their potential frictions in the contact zone that is Montreal. Robin calls her novel "a literary and social experiment," a collage, mixing the memories and impressions of the protagonist as she wanders through the neighborhoods of Montreal. As is common in *écriture migrante*, *La Québécoite*'s protagonist struggles to adjust to the harsh winter in Montreal (see also chapter 2.4.2.1). The protagonist claims she is not from Quebec, she is Other, "On ne devient pas Québécois" (Robin 1993, 54–55).[87] Montreal is blue in Robin's novel, blue is a dominant trope throughout: the city and the snow are blue, all eyes on the street, as well as faces in the cold are blue. "La campagne se transformait en un immense diamant bleu de ville polaire" (Robin 1993, 54–55).[88] In chapter 4.4 I further discuss the signification of colors in regards to seasonal nordicity, especially in reference to Alix Ohlin's *Inside*.

Another work of Montreal fiction featuring a wandering protagonist, André Major's novella *L'hiver au coeur* (1987) depicts Antoine having a personal crisis and wandering Montreal in a storm, where he rediscovers joy. Lise Tremblay has two urban novels in which seasonal nordicity plays a significant role. Her first novel, *L'hiver de pluie* (1990), immediately caught the attention of critics and heralded Tremblay as a great, new writer. In it, a woman wanders the streets of cold, but snowless Quebec City, alienated, her only aim not to

[86] Translation: "No one is cold when the game is king, when playing is a religion! […] Yes, winter was an important part of the wonders of the happy time of this impoverished childhood. We were rich, rich in such a beautiful season, rich in being able to play so, despite the cold."
[87] Translation: "One does not become Québécois."
[88] Translation: "The country transformed itself into an immense blue diamond of a polar city."

give in to inertia. *La danse juive* (1999), for which Tremblay won the Governor General's award, is set in Montreal, where an obese artist struggles to reconcile her multicultural urban life with her village upbringing in the "North," the Saguenay region. Lise Tremblay's entire oeuvre can be aptly called "*nordiste*," a term created by Louis-Edmond Hamelin meaning someone who knows how to take into account the entirety of the territory and to adapt to it in a material, a sociological, and a symbolic manner (Chartier 2011b, 408). In all of Major's and Tremblay's works named here, winter in the city allows for a metamorphosis for the characters.

Ying Chen's *Lettres chinoises* (1993) is an epistolary novel, a series of letters exchanged between two new Chinese emigrants to Montreal and their friend, Sassa, back in Shanghai. Yuan is Sassa's boyfriend, and Da Li, her best friend, who both experience their first winter as students in Montreal. "It is interesting to note that when Quebec writers born abroad define their sense of belonging, they do not necessarily use the term 'Québécois', but rather refer to the wintriness and nordicity of Quebec and, particularly, Montreal" (Chartier 2006, 45). Here, too, nordicity is laced throughout the novel, which begins and ends in winter. Montreal and Shanghai are repeatedly compared and revealed to be not so different. Yuan loves Montreal and the cold winter, snow makes him happy and warm inside. Yuan is depicted as warmth, whereas Sassa, who used to signify spring for him, is now cold (she is also sick and dying, see (Chen 1993, 30–31). The inhabitants of Montreal are pale white like the snow (116−117) and have brusque, cold exteriors, and smile less than the people of Shanghai because of the winter (108). Predictably, the relationship between Sassa and Yuan breaks down, and he has an affair with Da Li. As their relationship falls apart, Yuan fears Sassa's letters and he does not have the strength to get up to look out the window at the first snow fall, once so longed for and exciting, because the whiteness reminds him of the envelopes of her letters (132).[89]

Monique Proulx, another of Quebec's celebrated contemporary authors, published her second collection of short stories in 1996, *Les Aurores montréales*, which became a national best-seller. The volume is a tightly composed collection of twenty-seven short stories, told by narrators from different walks of life around the city. Proulx chose the genre of the short story because the subject of the book, the city of Montreal, seemed too complex and changeable to

[89] For more on the symbolism of windows in Québécois literature as a barrier from the cold, or a vantage point from which to observe the winter, see the discussion of Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* in chapter 6.2.

be contained in the structural rigor that a novel would demand (Hetel 2008, 114–15).[90] The title is obviously a pun evoking two northern connotations: *aurora borealis* (the Northern Lights) and the city of Montreal. Laura I. Hetel explains that Proulx's goal with this collection of stories is to synthesize the geographic and climatic nordicity of the city of Montreal and the human colors of this urban space, which Hetel calls "NordiCité" (Hetel 2008, 109). In the stories and on the collection's front cover, the city is dominated by grey, "la couleur nationale" (Proulx 1996, 9), interspersed with patches of color that represent the human presence, illuminating the city's nordicity (Hetel 2008, 109–10). Proulx has ingeniously structured the collection to fit together as one coherent entity: six stories frame and divide the other twenty-two into five parts. These six stories, printed completely in italics, are told by narrators of various ethnic origins (the rest of the narrators are "Québécois de souche"[91]), and are given titles of color revolving around whiteness (Gris et blanc, Jaune et blanc, Rose et blanc, Noir et Blanc, Rouge et blanc, Blanc; Hetel 2008, 112–13). White is, of course, associated with the North. Chartier notes "the strong symbolism of white which obliterates points of reference and threatens to absorb everything around it into the nothingness it represents" (Chartier 2007b, 43).[92] In the opening story of *Les Aurores montréales*, "Gris et Blanc," a young Costa Rican immigrant describes Montreal as "un endroit nordique et extrêmement civilisé [...] Le mot 'nordique' veut dire qu'il fait froid comme tu ne peux pas imaginer même si c'est seulement novembre"[93] (Proulx 1996, 7). The boy, who had complained of the greyness of the city, recounts in a letter to his dog, Manu, back in Costa Rica the joy of watching his first snowfall: "La beauté, Manu. La beauté blanche qui tombait à plein ciel, absolument blanche partout où c'était gris"[94] (9). The whiteness of the snow covers up the man-made ugliness of the city, "creating the impression of lost purity" (Chartier 2007b, 45). Although few of the stories in *Les Aurores montréales* expressly take up winter as a theme, the title and overall structure of the book clearly evoke seasonal nordicity. Further discussion of nordicity in Monique Proulx's works will follow in chapter 5.3 and 5.4 where her short story "Banana Chaudfroid" (1999) is examined.

[90] Interestingly, Proulx commented at a recent public book-signing celebrating her new Montreal novel, *Ce qu'il reste de moi*, that the chapters in this novel could also be read as independent stories.
[91] That is, Québécois of French origin whose ancestors have lived in Quebec for many generations.
[92] See also a discussion of color in the North, in Alix Ohlin's *Inside*, in chapter 4.4. and Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* in 6.1.
[93] Translation: "... a Nordic place and extremely civilized [...] The word 'Nordic' means that it is cold like you can't imagine, even if it is only November."
[94] Translation: "The beauty, Manu. The white beauty which fell from the sky, absolutely white everywhere where it was grey."

Seasonal nordicity continues to be prominent in twenty-first century Québécois fiction, as this project will explore. Not all recent novels of significance can be discussed at length, of course, but Nicolas Dickner's (2005) sensation *Nikolski* must be mentioned. The inventive magic realism of Dickner's tale earned it glowing reviews and numerous prizes in Quebec and France. The English translation won the *Canada Reads 2010* competition, causing it to be widely read throughout the country. Dickner weaves a complex family tree of characters coming from the west, east, and south who converge on Montreal, a "northern place." Gilles Dupuis explains how Montreal acts as the guiding North Star for all of them: "Partis de l'est (la mère du narrateur; Joyce et sa mère; le père du narrateur et de Noah), de l'ouest (Noah et le narrateur avec sa mère) ou du sud (Arizna), ils ont tous transité par la métropole québécoise, véritable étoile polaire de ce roman aux destinées déboussolées" (Dupuis 2011, 167).[95] The guiding motif of the novel is a broken compass whose needle obstinately points to the tiny Aleutian village of Nikolski rather than true North. The compass was sent to the unnamed narrator by his absentee father, Jonas Doucet, when he lived in Nikolski. The motif of the compass, the direction north, and north/south dichotomies permeate the novel.[96]

Nikolski bears some traits similar to the anglophone novels in this study. Linda Leith mentions "emblems of marginality" in English Quebec fiction of the 1980s, including the two most consistent features in all six of Reid's novels, "the image of an adult orphan and a subsequent motif of abandonment" (Reid 2009, 77). These motifs are also present in Ohlin's *Inside* (chapter 4): Mitch's parents are dead; Tug cuts himself off from his family and behaves like an orphan; Grace's parents have moved to British Columbia and she seems isolated from them. Mitch is the character who most significantly abandons relationships and wrestles with guilt over having done so, and also struggles with feeling abandoned by his father who committed suicide. Tug abandons his marriage and his career after the Rwandan genocide and is haunted by having abandoned his Rwandan friends: he was evacuated safely to Kenya while they were slaughtered. In Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter* (chapter 6), Janie is orphaned by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge and comes to Canada as an unaccompanied minor. Her life is defined by this traumatic experience; she is haunted by survivor's guilt and begins to act out in rage and violence against her own son. To protect him, she moves out of her

[95] Translation: "Leaving from the east (the mother of the narrator; Joyce and her mother; the father of the narrator and of Noah), from the west (Noah and the narrator with his mother) or the south (Arizna), they are all transported towards the Québécois metropolis, the true north star in this novel of disoriented destinies."

[96] It should be noted that a maritime imagery, including references to fish, fishing, boats, the ocean, and islands, runs strongly through the novel, and is even more predominant than nordicity in *Nikolski*, appearing in turns of phrase on nearly every page.

apartment and keeps a painful distance between herself and her husband and son while she wrestles with her past. The motifs of the adult orphan and abandonment are also present in Dickner's *Nikolski*: all of the main characters are orphans or function as orphans, with no communication with their parents. The motif of abandonment is the thread that ties all of them together through the elusive character of Jonas Doucet, the father/uncle who disappeared but whose presence never leaves their lives. This commonality is an example of overlap and exchange between anglophone and francophone contemporary Montreal fiction, more so than in previous decades.

In 2009 Dany Laferrière published the popular and prize-winning autobiographical novel[97] *L énigme du retour*, in which a Haitian-born author from Montreal returns to visit his native country after his father's death. Numerous comparisons between North and South ensue, and the writer remembers his first winter in Montreal many years ago. This book is a companion of sorts to Laferrière's *Chronique de la dérive douce*, mentioned in chapter 2.4.2.1, and originally published in 1994, thus making it too early to be included in this text corpus of twenty-first century Montreal fiction.[98] However, after the success of *L énigme du retour*, Laferrière revised and republished *Chronique de la dérive douce* in 2012. Although the 2012 Boréal edition calls it a *Roman* (novel) on the cover, *Chronique de la derive douce* is sometimes referred to as "a long-form poem" (Skallerup Bessette 2013, 13), as it is written in prose verse reminiscent of Japanese haikus. Part of Laferrière's ten-book "Autobiographie Américaine" (Skallerup Bessette 2013, 11), published at a pace of about one book per year from 1985-2000, *Chronique de la dérive douce* is also autobiographical as it details the young immigrant's first year in Montreal. The impoverished protagonist arrives in the summer of 1976 amidst the Montreal Olympics, and chronicles all four seasons as he struggles to find lodgings, food, and a job in an exploitative tannery in a Montreal suburb. Laferrière takes up themes of sex, race, class division, and the struggles of immigrants to adapt to 1970s North American society. His experience of Montreal's intense cold, snow, and ice are significant as he has chosen to live in Montreal's hostile climate (Laferrière 2012 [1994], 126) rather than rot in a Haitian prison (162). Whiteness (both of the snow and the skin color of Montreal's inhabitants in comparison to his blackness) are significant markers of nordicity in the novel.

The new arrival, never named but referred to as "Vieux" by a seasoned African immigrant, walks the city streets attempting to understand this new culture's rhythms and

[97] Some call this work a long poem, as it is comprises a mix of poetry and prose, subdivided into 1−5 page titled sections.
[98] The original 1994 version was translated into English and published as *A Drifting Year* in 1997.

customs. He frequently travels on a North-South axis, walking or taking the bus, metro, or taxi. The protagonist of *Chronique de la dérive douce* is a flâneur, devouring the city with his gaze and entertaining many female sexual partners in his slum apartments. Yet, he differs from the typical modernist flâneur described in chapter 1.3.2 in that he is black, a Haitian exile who fled the Duvalier dictatorship and struggles to find his feet in this Nordic, white city as an immigrant seen as cheap and disposable labor working in an exploitative factory. Similar to Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*, examined in chapter 6, windows are a prevalent trope in the novel as the young man and other solitary characters living in his building observe the city. He opens the window "to see the snow cover the city […] My first snowstorm at the age of twenty-three. It's more impressive than the sea, but less moving" (Laferrière 1997, 85–86). Seeing and being seen through windows aid the young man in getting to know the city and its people. Though some of the themes and tropes of this novel are similar to the novels in my text corpus (walking the city, windows, an immigrant fleeing a dangerous past in another country), Laferrière's protagonist is far more focused on getting to know his new city than on processing his memories of the past. No traumatic memories resurface as he traverses the city, unlike characters in Ohlin's and Thien's novels (see chapters 4 and 6). The young man is wholly immersed in getting to know Montreal's people and culture. Typical of Québec fiction written in the late twentieth century, Laferrière expresses the role of winter as being at the heart of Quebec identity issues:

> On vit l'hiver étrangement. On l'annonce deux mois avant. On le subit en silence pendant six mois. Et quand il est enfin parti, on vous menace de son retour imminent. L'hiver se retrouve au cœur de la question identitaire. On l'utilise parfois pour intimider le nouveau venu. D'autres fois, on le revendique pour proclamer sa spécificité culturelle. On se reconnaît donc dans ce vers : 'Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver.'[99] (Laferrière 2012 [1994], 177)

Chronique de la dérive douce ends with the protagonist being reborn as a writer in Montreal, when he quits his job at the factory and buys a Remington typewriter. *L énigme du retour* revisits some of the same scenes from the writer's first winter in Montreal, here an excerpt from the 2011 translation by David Homel entitled *The Return*:

[99] Translation: "They experience winter strangely. They herald it two months early. They suffer it in silence for six months. And when it finally leaves, they threaten you with its imminent return. The winter is at the heart of the identity question. They sometimes use it to intimidate a new arrival. Other times, they claim it to proclaim their cultural uniqueness. They recognize themselves thus in this verse: 'My country is not a country, its winter.'"

Behind the Frosted Window

On that December afternoon I was just
a shadow behind the frosted window
admiring
one of nature's most impressive spectacles.
Fascinated, I watched all that snow
endlessly falling.

The poet Émile Nelligan gained immortality
by using the word "snow" twice
in one very brief line:
"Oh, how the snow has snowed!"
Gilles Vigneault reached the same heights by singing
"My country is not a country, it's winter."
Here ice is the road to glory.

People of the North seem
so attracted by the sea
while ice frightens people of the South.
Is the seduction of hot weather enough
to explain why the first group
became colonizers much more easily
than the second?

No one saw it the way I did,
the snow falling
in fat gentle flakes.
I escaped the island that seemed like a prison to me
and ended up encased
in a room in Montreal. (Laferrière 2011, 36)

This passage exemplifies Laferrière's manner of weaving intertextual references to his own oeuvre as well as to other writers' works, in this case the two most well-known texts in the Québécois nordicity canon, Émile Nelligan's poem *Soir d'hiver* (1898) and Gilles Vigneault's classic chanson *Mon pays*, mentioned in chapter 2.3.1. It is evident in the passage above how Laferrière uses seasonal nordicity in Montreal to take up tropes of colonization, race, and class in the passage above. In his fiction and interviews, Laferrière has repeatedly referred to the role of winter in Quebec as a means of integrating immigrants, a "trial by ice," so to speak, rather than fire. As his protagonist sits in a plane, about to leave Montreal for his return to visit Haiti after 35 years, he ponders how Montreal's ice has come to live inside of him:

> Exile combined with cold
> and loneliness.
> One year, in those conditions, counts as two.
> My bones have dried out from inside.
>
> Our eyes tired from seeing the same scene.
> Our ears weary from hearing the same music.
> We are disappointed at having become
> what we have become.
> And we understand nothing
> of this strange transformation
> that has occurred without our knowledge.
>
> Exile in time is more pitiless
> than exile in space.
> I miss
> my childhood more intensely
> than my country.
>
> […]

One last look out the airplane window.
This cold white city
where I've known my strongest passions.
Now ice lives inside me
almost as much as fire. (Laferrière 2011, 52–53)

Thus the immigrant has come to embody Quebec's nordicity almost to the extent that he still carries Haiti's fire with him.

3.4 Conclusion: Urban Fiction in Canada in the Twenty-First Century

The city is here to stay in Canadian literature. Over the coming decades, Canada's urban population will grow and so will its literature's focus on the realities of urban life. Although it took until the 1940s for urban literature to begin in francophone Quebec, and until the 1980s to take off in English Canada, it is well and truly here to stay. An increased focus among literary scholars on urban literature in Canada since the turn of the twenty-first century will help to ensure its continued publication and celebrity. As, by any definition, at least 60 percent of Canadians live in cities, they will continue to enjoy and demand literature written about their everyday, lived experiences. And the vibrancy of urban life, the possibilities it provides as a contact zone for cultural creatives and peoples of all cultures and languages to meet, will continue to inspire Canada's writers. Montreal, with its reputation as an entertainment capital and one of the best North American cities for students to live in (see Seidman 2014; no pagination), will continue to attract and produce creative writers of all genres.

This chapter has provided an overview of influential Montreal fiction writers and their works throughout the twentieth century, and their interaction with seasonal nordicity, that is, winter in the city. Now, in the following chapters I dive into my text corpus of twenty-first century Montreal fiction in both English and French, where I closely examine the writers' use of ice, cold, and snow, as well as the colors of winter, and how the winter affects the social and spatial practices of urbanites.

4 Spatiality of Cold: Montreal as a Nordic Urban Space in Alix Ohlin's *Inside*

After the preceding chapters laid a theoretical foundation for the consideration of the city as a site of North in Canadian and Québécois literature, I will now closely investigate several examples of recent Montreal fiction. This chapter examines representations of cold in twenty-first century Montreal fiction through the lens of Alix Ohlin's 2012 novel *Inside*. I will determine how the characters of this novel use space, keeping in mind that "the notion of spatiality emphasizes that space is not primordial or naturally given but is instead produced in social practices" (Rosenthal 2011, 11). Which parts of the city they inhabit and the seasons represented delimit and create Montreal as a Nordic winter space. Before diving into an analysis of the novel, I will first briefly define "cold" and outline conceptions of the discourse of cold.

4.1 Cold as Discourse

One important aspect of seasonal nordicity is, of course, the cold, which is the focus of this chapter. "Cold" is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as follows: "of or at a low or relatively low temperature, especially when compared with the human body." Looking at the subcategories of this first definition, it becomes clear that cold is commonly understood to be a negative state or attribute. These subsequent definitions include "(of a person) feeling uncomfortably cold"; "feeling or characterized by fear or horror*:* 'a cold shiver of fear'" and "dead: 'lying cold and stiff in a coffin.'" The second categorical definition of cold is: "lacking affection or warmth of feeling; unemotional," and contains the following sub-categories: "not affected by emotion; objective," "sexually unresponsive; frigid," "depressing or dispiriting; not suggestive of warmth," and "(of a colour) containing pale blue or grey" (Oxford English Dictionary 2014).

Heidi Hansson and Cathrine Norberg explain in their study *Cold Matters* that "for centuries, 'cold' as a cultural idea has been surrounded with negative connotations representing a denial of life and progress. Such understandings are not altogether innocent since they continue to govern the way people interpret and present the idea of cold" (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 7). Although kinder images of cold exist, such as childish snowmen, intricate snowflakes, or the usefulness of a refrigerator, "[t]he same fear-inspiring features are prototypically associated with snow, ice and cold" (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 8). In their

investigation of both literature and linguistics using the British National Corpus language database, Hansson and Norberg find that

> 'cold' appears in various constellations as the negation of life and growth, and is used in a positive sense almost exclusively with reference to refreshments such as 'cold beer' […] 'cold' sometimes seems to emphasise physical discomfort in general rather than describe actual low temperatures, and the word slips between a metaphorical and a literal meaning. (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 8)

Representations of cold have, then, been constructed culturally and reinforced over time by innumerable texts which manifest negative perceptions of cold. Cold does, however, have positive uses and attributes: mastering the cold for the refrigeration of food revolutionized the world in the twentieth century, allowing families to save money (food does not rot), eat fresher, healthier foods, and freeing up (and valuing) women's time that was previously spent on laborious, time-consuming food preservation and preparation methods. In several of the novels in my text corpus, the refrigerator is mentioned repeatedly (see Thien's novel analyzed in chapter 6, as well as Laferrière 2012 [1994]), thus bringing the cold inside their apartments and giving them some mastery over it.

Just as refrigeration technologies are associated with housewives, "[t]he principle of cold tends to be female, in both the east […] and in the west […]" (Davidson 2005, 69). Although psychological coldness could be seen as a strength, supplying a rational outlook on decision-making ("not affected by emotion; objective," as in the dictionary definition above), it is far more often attributed to women with a negative connotation as being sexually cold and unresponsive. Hansson and Norberg elaborate:

> When human relations are measured with the help of a temperature scale, this connection between 'cold' and 'death' usually means that a cold personality is figured as negative. When women are concerned, coldness is frequently presented in life-denying terms, and descriptions that focus on cold character traits are especially common for women with access to power. Designations like "ice maiden," "ice queen" and "ice virgin" abound, which indicates that the powerful woman is understood as passionless and sterile. (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 8–9)

In Ohlin's novel, below, we will see how the character of Annie/Anne subverts this characterization of cold women.

Canadian literature has often focused on the deadly aspect of extreme cold and with a preponderance of characters freezing to death or being disfigured by the cold. Hansson and Norberg observe in their study: "The very strong association between 'cold' and 'death' means that the overwhelming majority of experiences represented as cold include some aspect that seems to deny life" (2009, 8). Although Ohlin also depicts positive aspects of the cold, she associates numerous deaths with the cold and winter. Both the characters Annie and Grace have abortions in winter (additionally, Grace abruptly ends her high school downhill ski career as a form of penance; Annie hides her "thin frame" in a "puffy ski jacket" (Ohlin 2012a, 109) after the abortion procedure). After an evening of partying, Thomasie's mother stumbles out drunk into an Iqaluit snowstorm with Karen, his three-year-old sister. Karen freezes to death that night, "shivering against her [mother's] cold skin" (96); Thomasie's mother dies a few weeks later after being in a coma, "her brain was probably damaged irreparably by those hours in the snow" (94). Additionally, when Mitch's mother dies of cancer he remembers, "It was winter" (211). As we will see in the following analysis, Alix Ohlin's *Inside* both confirms and contests the common characterizations of cold delineated above by Hansson and Norberg, portraying a nuanced, multifaceted narrative of seasonal nordicity.

4.2 Structure and Symmetrical Character Constellation

Alix Ohlin's *Inside* is replete with motifs of seasonal nordicity in the city. Ohlin published the novel concurrently with a collection of short stories, *Signs and Wonders*, on June 5, 2012.[100] The novel was short-listed for both the Scotiabank Giller Prize in 2012, one of Canada's most prestigious literary prizes, and the Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize.[101] The word "inside" is repeated hundreds of times in the novel, in both the literal meaning (coming "inside" from the cold), coming inside in numerous sexual encounters, and also points to the narrative's focus on the characters' complicated inner lives. As a reviewer points out, "Whenever an author names a book after a single word, you can't help but notice each time it is used. In the case of

[100] A reviewer commented: "The last time such a double-barreled strategy was employed in the pop culture arena, it was by Guns N' Roses. Ohlin, I'm prepared to say, offers a take on the human condition that in its nuance and insight puts Axl Rose in the shade" (McGillis 2012; no pagination).

[101] These nominations followed a summer of controversy surrounding a scathing review of Ohlin's work published in the *New York Times Book Review* by William Giraldi on August 17, 2012 (Giraldi 2012). Other online articles appeared criticizing Giraldi's "almost horrifyingly aggressive" review (Lennon 2012; no pagination). The Canadian publishing world rallied around Ohlin, putting out glowing reviews, see Hampson 2012, Medley 2012, Cerny 2012. *Inside*'s popularity cannot be denied, north or south of the border, as it was selected as an Oprah's Book Club Summer Reading Pick, an Amazon.ca Best Book, and an iTunes Store Best Book, and ultimately the book's clever structure, insight into human relationships, and integral use of the motif of seasonal nordicity in Montreal should not be marred by one negative review.

Inside, the word refers to shelter, intimacy and internality" (Medley 2012; no pagination). As she stated in an interview, Ohlin did not write the novel with this title in mind and considered several other options; it was Ohlin's editor and former boss, Gary Fisketjon, who suggested the eventual title. Ohlin elaborates: "[The title] seemed so perfectly suited to the multiple levels of the book […] Because it's about people getting inside each other's heads, often inside each other's physical spaces, and then also inside culture at various times" (Medley 2012).

Inside is narrated in a non-linear fashion, cutting back and forth between three plots in differing times and places by homodiegetic intradiegetic narration. The first story line takes place in Montreal in January to April of 1996, focalized through Grace, a psychologist, and follows the development of Grace's strange romance with Tug. It also introduces Annie, a teenager who is in counseling with Grace.[102] The second narrative brings the reader to post 9/11 New York City, beginning in January 2002, in which the cold-hearted, beautiful Anne (the grown-up Annie) pursues an acting career and surprises herself by taking in a teenage runaway. The third strand of the story, set in 2006, focuses on Mitch, Grace's ex-husband, beginning in Iqaluit, Nunavut, and then returning to Montreal. For my purposes here, I will limit my analysis primarily to the Montreal sections in strands one and three, which comprise about two-thirds of the novel.

Each chapter is numbered and states the city and year in which it takes place, helping to keep the reader on track despite numerous analepses within the chapters to points prior. It is noteworthy that Ohlin always designates the specific *city* in which she locates her chapters: for example, chapter eight is entitled "Kigali, 1994" although the capital of Rwanda is lesser known to a wide audience than simply stating the country's name (in the chapter, Tug also recounts how his life unfolded in Canada, Guatemala, and Kenya). Similarly, chapter three is denoted "Iqaluit, 2006" although the name of the Nunavut capital is likely unknown to most readers from outside Canada. Now an Associate Professor of English and teacher of Creative Writing at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania, Ohlin is thus surely cognizant of every detail she chooses to include in her fiction, and firmly locates her novel in the genre of *urban* fiction, avoiding national discourses (for this tendency in anglo-québécois fiction, see chapter 3.2.2.3).

[102] Annie is put in counseling by her overbearing parents, an orthodontist and a lawyer, who belong to the rich, anglophone elite of Montreal. Her parents "had raised her to hold herself to a high standard" (22), her mother "threw a fit" (25) because sixteen-year-old Annie has a hangnail, thus marring her twenty-dollar manicure. Annie engages in self-harm, cutting herself as a form of release from the pressure she feels to conform to her parents' expectations of perfection (298) and dates dangerous boys.

As the reader progresses through *Inside*, she begins to notice shadows of similarity among the characters, including both protagonists and secondary characters, in this very highly structured novel. Ohlin has called the book "a 'quilt.' Patterns appear and reappear in the three major storylines which, knitted together, form *Inside*" (Medley 2012; no pagination).[103] Ohlin weaves the three narrative strands intricately, giving equal weight to all three plots and numerous characters. Upon closer analysis, nine binary pairs and one triad of characters can be determined. Grace and Ann(i)e[104] share the experience of having had a teenage pregnancy which they kept a secret and ended in abortion. Hilary and Ann(i)e both run away from home as teenagers, are compulsive liars, and both had a teenage pregnancy as a result of an aberrant sexual encounter. Anne and Mitch are both repeatedly described as self-centered and vain; both abandon the people in their lives and run away to escape complicated relationships. Grace and Martine are both single mothers of one child who get romantically involved with Mitch. Annie and Thomasie are both troubled teens in counseling with Grace and Mitch, respectively, and both adult therapists feel they have failed to really help the teenagers. Thomasie and Tug both commit suicide. Tug and Mitch both try to help a young boy in a desperate situation (Yozefu in Rwanda in Tug's case, Thomasie in Iqaluit in Mitch's) whom they fail to be able to protect or save, as both boys die tragically. Both Mitch's unnamed father and Tug are haunted by their experiences of war (Mitch's father could never get over "the things he saw in France," Ohlin 2012a, 208, referring to the Second World War; Tug was shaken by his experience of the Rwandan genocide) and cannot shake free the evil they have witnessed; eventually both take their own lives. In the novel, two different teenagers (Hilary and Thomasie) lose their parents and a younger sibling in tragic accidents.

And finally, the main triad of Mitch, Grace, and Tug: all three manifest a "savior complex," that is a compulsion to intervene and "save" someone regardless of whether they have asked for help. All three characters derive self-worth and purpose from their need to be needed by other people. Tug manifests a "savior complex" in his job as an aid worker in some of the most dangerous places on the globe, areas undergoing war or disasters. The adrenaline

[103] Ohlin also writes in a blog post about the influence of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* on her own narrative structure: "The way I structured *Inside*—it covers a decade and is told out of chronological order, breaking from one moment in time to the next—was surely influenced by Woolf's swooping, radical handling of time" (Ohlin 2012c).

[104] The character is referred to as Anne in the chapters in which she is an adult, and as Annie when still a teenager in Montreal.

high ("He could go weeks without sleeping more than three or four hours a night", 227)[105] is exciting and makes life feel worthwhile and important. He is an expert at what he does: "Tug knew how to rig tents and set up a basic medical facility, where in a given terrain the latrines should be dug, and that when you hand out rice you give it to the women first, never to men and especially never to young men" (226−227). He loves being in developing nations among impoverished, desperate people, "thriving on their need" (227). Tug cannot cope with the comparatively boring, easy, comfortable life with his wife Marcie in a routine Canadian family—Christmas with their parents, a vacation in Florida (227). Significantly, the image of freezing is used to poignantly depict Tug's feeling of paralysis and confinement when he is back at home with Marcie: "At home in Canada, by contrast, he froze up. Faced with insurance companies, with the routine upkeep of his parents' house, with his mother's small talk about the neighbors, he barely had enough energy to get through the day" (227). Whereas working in warm countries doing disaster relief filled him with adrenaline, life in Canada freezes Tug. His savior complex has ruined him for any kind of happy life in the "comfortable nations" (247), and he admits "[h]e was addicted to want" (234). Reviewer Ian McGillis also notes the pattern of suffering and saving in Ohlin's novel: "A pattern is set: someone has suffered something terrible, and someone else must decide just how far their duty to help goes and what exactly their motives are beyond simple instinct" (McGillis 2012; no pagination). Ohlin explores the potential for, and limits of, healing through talk therapy.[106]

Mitch and Grace, as explained above, are psychologists who escape their own issues by trying to help their patients, often drug or alcohol addicts or self-harming teenagers. But both Mitch and Grace also have a compulsive urge to help others in their private lives, clearly as an avoidance strategy for dealing with their own needs and brokenness. In 2006, Mitch travels to Iqaluit to escape his tense relationship with his then-girlfriend, Martine. He is quite disillusioned with himself in middle age, remembering, "A long time ago, as a young man, he had thought of himself as a savior, and this was the fervor he had passed on to Grace" (77). After Thomasie, one of his patients in Iqaluit, kills himself, Mitch returns abruptly to Montreal: "Failing a patient as he had was every therapist's worst fear" (188), thus back at work in the city he distracts himself with group-therapy sessions: "Thank God for other

[105] Please note that in the remainder of section 4.2. on Alix Ohlin's novel *Inside*, all page numbers inserted simply in brackets pertain to her novel, Ohlin 2012a.

[106] Tug goes to see a therapist himself after his traumatic experience with the Rwandan genocide, discussed later in this chapter. "He didn't mean to be graphic or shocking. […] He found that he was drawn to concrete details, and after talking for forty-five minutes without interruption, he felt marginally better. Emptier." (240) When he then hears his therapist vomiting in the bathroom stall beside him, he cancels all subsequent appointments "wanting to give the therapist a respite from the terrible details" (240).

people's problems" (188). Both Mitch and Grace bury themselves in their work when faced with difficult life situations. After Tug succeeds at his second suicide attempt in April of 1996, Grace "longed to go back to work, to lose herself in the world of other people. Her patients were her only relief […] She needed them as much as they needed her, maybe even more" (258).

4.2.1 Cold Characters: The Effects of Cold on Ohlin ô Characterization

After having established the patterns of symmetrical character constellation in *Inside*, I will investigate in this sub-chapter the effects of cold on several of Ohlin's characters, providing a multifaceted portrayal of cold's diverse properties. The narrative opens with Grace cross-country skiing on Mount Royal, the wooded mountain park right in the heart of Montreal. Grace literally crashes into what first appears to be a log on the snowy trail, and then realizes it is the almost-lifeless body of a man who has unsuccessfully tried to hang himself from a tree above. Accompanying the man to the hospital, she discovers he is an anglophone named Tug, and Grace becomes entangled in his life. Grace feels compelled to save this man and pushes her way into his life, pretending to be his therapist and later his wife in order to be at his bedside in the hospital, and then drives him home and invites herself into his apartment.

Grace has always loved the cold and snow which make her feel at peace (1) and help her to think clearly (258-260). She wants to get to know Tug, although he is very aloof and difficult to communicate with, and so it was that "[a]n idea came to her with the weather" (120).

> She woke up on a Saturday morning to find the world softened with snow. Outside people were shoveling out their cars, the trucks rumbling through the streets, plowing and salting. Her neighbor, Mr Diallou, cleared a path around his Honda only to see a truck banking snow around it, obstructing him again. He raised his fist and cursed the driver. Grace smiled, knowing what to do. (120)

This passage juxtaposes a typical winter scene in Montreal, the struggle of its citizens to keep pace with heavily falling snow and the on-going battle with snow plows, with positive imagery. The world is "*softened* with snow" (emphasis added), confirming Hansson and Norberg's observation that snow tends to be more positively connoted than cold or ice (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 11). The laborious effort of shoveling out one's car only to have it surrounded with snow again, the dirt, noise, and corrosiveness inherent to "plowing and

salting," is placed side by side with the beauty of a fresh blanket of snow. Chartier explains that the symbolism of covering an urban landscape with white snow is a common "discursive use of Arctic and winter white. In works set in urban centers in winter, for example, the cities are covered in white, creating the impression of lost purity" (Chartier 2007b, 45). The "lost purity" in this case could symbolize the end of Grace's pre-Tug life, as from this point onwards she becomes embroiled in his decidedly complicated life. In this passage replete with juxtapositions, Mr. Diallou's anger and frustration is apposed with Grace's smile. Snow is always positively connected with Grace (Ohlin 2012a, 209), who finds it refreshing, invigorating, and in this case, it triggers the idea of how to build a relationship with Tug: cross-country skiing. Grace and Tug go skiing in large Montreal parks often over the ensuing four months and become romantically involved.

Contrary to Grace, Tug comments "I never pay attention to the weather" (122) and he seems immune to the cold, notably never wearing a hat outside. At one point, Tug waits for hours outside of Grace's office "on a freezing afternoon" (131). When Grace twice comments that he looks cold, he is too preoccupied to notice: Tug contains an inner heat ("his mind was at a simmering boil, his muscles clenched with its heat", 248) and the cold cannot touch him. He finally tells Grace what drove him to attempt suicide: He was an aid worker in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide and friends of his were brutally murdered. Tug returned to Canada, likely afflicted by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and got a job in Montreal at a stationary store where he filled his days with routine tasks. In the evenings, he drank Canadian Club whisky and watched hockey to numb himself, both cold-related solutions. In the winter, Tug "took to walking for hours after he got off work, letting the cold air pinch his nose and ears" (243). A sort of anti-flâneur (see chapter 1.3.2), Tug walks the city not to consciously observe it and take part in its life, but to forget what he has seen. "He was most comfortable tiring himself out by walking around the city, appreciating the wide-open streets, the uncrowded avenues, the scentless air" (240). Montreal's city space is depicted as cold and lacking both activity and smells; the Nordic city acts as a counter-balance, a refuge from the vivid smells, heat, and violence Tug had encountered in Rwanda.[107]

Four months after his first suicide attempt, Tug does finally kill himself on the mountain. While mourning his death, it is when she goes cross-country skiing in the "white, blank calm" of Gatineau Park that Grace realizes she is pregnant with Tug's child (259).

[107] See also chapter 6.1, as Montreal again serves this function as a cold, urban counter-balance for the protagonist of Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide.

Grace drives 650 kilometers to Tug's parents' house in Brantford, Ontario, and learns many things he had lied to her about. After this awkward visit, she sits in her car contemplating her future. She did not tell Tug's parents, or Marcie, Tug's estranged wife, about the baby she is carrying to avoid causing them more pain.

> Behind the steering wheel with the engine running and the heater on, she shivered not from the cold but from a sense of possibility, of the enormity that lay ahead. She knew she would have the child of a person she had loved for just a few months. Despite her pain and sorrow, it somehow felt like exactly what she'd always wanted – for her life to change in a way she couldn't foresee. (320)

Again here we see that cold is positively associated with Grace; it is connected to possibility, hope, and new life.

Conversely, the strand of the novel focalized through Mitch is permeated with negative references to the winter, cold, and snow, and a desire to escape it all. Mitch remembers that when growing up with his widowed mother and brother, "Snow was the great equalizer of their family. They all hated it, the three of them having shared the task of shoveling for years. They could talk about it for hours – when it would start, how much was coming, when it would end. Nothing bonded them so completely as snow" (208-09). Back when Grace and Mitch were still married, she had tried to encourage his family, "'You just have to get out in it! […] 'You have to embrace the snow. Have fun with it. Go skiing, build a snowman, throw snowballs'" (209). Mitch's mother blithely answered, "'Now why would I want to do that, dear?'" (209)

In Mitch's 2006 narrative, a typical "spring" in Montreal, including "snow birds," Canadians flying south to escape the winter, is depicted:

> It was March, with winter still holding on tight and squeezing out one snowstorm after another, as if trying to build to some grand finale. Mitch's coworkers took turns going on vacation to Florida or the Bahamas, returning five days later with sunburns and airs of grim disappointment that winter hadn't given up and vanished while they were out of town. (85)

Years after divorcing Grace, Mitch has a complicated relationship with Martine, a "sexy and brilliantly smart" (63) francophone lawyer. After a one-night stand, Mitch shows up unexpectedly at Martine's house and meets Mathieu, her seven-year-old son who has

Asperger Syndrome (78). Mathieu, surprised by the unknown visitor, loses control and tantrums in another room while Mitch "stood in the hallway, winter's cold hands grabbing his back, feeling like more of a jackass than he had in his entire life" (71). Over time, Mitch builds a strong bond with Mathieu, who, like Tug, is impervious to the cold.

> Mathieu loved the snow and playing in the park and never seemed to feel the cold, even when his lips were turning blue and his teeth were chattering. When Martine told him it was time to come in, he would tremble with rage, as if she were robbing him of his most precious possession. (85)

Due to Asperger's, Mathieu does not register the sensation of intense cold as easily as a neurotypical person and may be sensory seeking just to feel anything at all.

The protagonist of the second narrative strand, Anne, is an atypical cold female character, as referred to by Hansson and Norberg, above. Although her attitude towards all human relationships is distanced ("whoever cares the least has the greatest advantage," 268), she is good at hiding and controlling her emotions ("her face was as blank as snow," 27) and she is emotionally detached from the men and woman she sleeps with ("'You're a coldhearted bitch,'" 287; "'Man,' he said, 'you really are this cold. My friends thought I was making it up.'" 288). Yet Anne is also portrayed as highly sexual and alluring, and as an actress, she embodies highly sexualized characters in plays and on television. Anne's sensuality and teenage pregnancy complicates the common portrayal of cold women in literature as frigid and barren.

One reviewer commented on the characters in *Inside*: "for all the coupling and acts of salvation, intended or accepted out of obligation, no one's heart seems to be in it. It's this cold quality that makes *Inside* so engrossing. You think, 'Who are these people?'" (Carman 2012). Carman attributes a "cold quality" in a general sense not only to Anne but to other characters as well, implying the negative definitions of cold mentioned above (lacking affection). One could not describe this novel as heartwarming or its characters as endearing. Ohlin's characters are messy and flawed humans, though not very easy to love they are easy to relate to, as her authentic depictions are reminiscent of real people. In the next section, I will analyze another northifying attribute of Ohlin's narrative, ice hockey as a motif of refuge and escape.

4.2.2 Hockey as Refuge

As a winter sport played on ice, the presence of hockey in a novel immediately "northifies the work," to speak with Chartier. For many of the men in *Inside*, hockey is a form of escape from loneliness, a feeling of uselessness, or traumatic events. Tug's father watches hockey after his son's death (310), and Mitch "let the predictions and opinions" of hockey season "wash over him," taking notes and creating a fantasy team (321) at a supremely lonely point in his life. As mentioned above, hockey is a form of escape for Tug when he struggles to readjust to life in Canada after the Rwandan genocide. Not only does he watch hockey while drinking Canadian Club whiskey in the home he shares with his wife Marcie before they separate, hockey was the way he connected to Yozefu in Rwanda. Yozefu was the son of Etienne, the manager of the housing complex where Tug was living. Etienne had heard about hockey from his brother-in-law who studied in Quebec:

> especially about the Montreal Canadiens. He asked Tug about the Stanley Cup and his favorite players, and this–of all their discussions–captured his son's attention. Yozefu was eleven years old and found this new sport intriguing. He demanded to know the rules and the names of the teams, how the game was played and for how long, and Tug was soon explaining the minutiae of penalty shots, sudden-death overtime, and off-sides. The boy and his friends clamored for more information. (230)

Tug uses the boys' banana leaf soccer ball and a branch to demonstrate stick handling and struggles to explain how ice skates, what Yozefu called "machete shoes" (231), managed to not get stuck. "There was no way that Yozefu could understand the idea of a game played on ice, that he could imagine a rink or any part of winter at all" (231). Tug was known to his fellow aid workers as "the Silent Canadian" (232) as he would not talk much, except about hockey. Ice hockey is thus reinforced as a national characteristic of Canada, and by extension ice, cold, and winter, as an intrinsic part of Canadian national identity setting it off from other nations.

When the Rwandan genocide began, "Within hours most of the white people were evacuated" (235). Tug stayed in Kenya and Uganda until he was let back into Rwanda four months later. When he went to see his abandoned room, inside Etienne's apartment "a bloody heap he had thought was trash shifted itself and came toward him," which turned out to be the maimed boy. Yozefu told Tug of the atrocities he and his family had endured in an emotionless voice. Tug took him to a hospital and sat with him for two days and nights until the boy died. "And that was it. Tug became a zombie, useless in the field" (239). When, back

in Montreal, Tug wanders the city in the cold, he comes across young boys playing hockey at an outdoor rink, and "Yozefu came to him unbidden, unwanted. He saw the boy not as he'd been in the days before his death but as he'd looked when Tug first met him. He saw him laughing as he kicked the banana-leaf puck around the dusty courtyard, yelling, 'He shoots, he scores!'" (243). Tug breaks down in sobs, he "curled into a ball next to the rink and tried to huddle there for warmth" (243) until a hockey father tells him to leave because he is scaring the children. Hockey was the ultimate escape fantasy from a difficult reality for Yozefu as well, and also acts as a trigger for Tug's traumatic memories. Ohlin uses the cold imagery of a winter sport the boy could not truly fathom as synonymous with a place of escape, a place of refuge. For Tug, then, hockey plays a more complex role than simply as a distraction or form of escape; it is also deeply connected with his sense of national belonging, and later with the trauma of the Rwandan genocide, PTSD, and survivor's guilt.

In sum, Ohlin's characters have divergent relationships with the cold. Grace loves it, Tug and Mathieu are immune to it, and Mitch hates and avoids it, though he slowly begins to change as we will see in the sections below. Hockey and the association of death with cold are recurrent motifs used by Ohlin to shape the narrative, exhibiting the strong influence of seasonal nordicity on Montreal fiction.

4.3 Cold City Space: Montreal ô Total Nordicity

Significantly, much of Ohlin's novel takes place in the winter, a "stormy and breezy" fall (173) or a "cold spring" (248). Vivid descriptions of the weather and seasons help the reader to keep the three interwoven time periods straight. The parts of the narrative that take place outside of Montreal are almost exclusively set in summer.[108] The Montreal of both the 1996 and 2006 plotlines exists almost entirely in the cold. Although the 2006 section covers an entire calendar year, Ohlin denies summer in the city by having Mitch spend June through August in Iqaluit, Nunavut.[109] Only two weeks after Mitch returns to Montreal, in early September, fall is coming on strong (173); the "frigid air" causes the characters to don scarves

[108] The 2002 New York City narrative does start out in January in the damp, "freezing cold" (35), however "pretty" spring weather in New York is also described, as opposed to Montreal which Ohlin almost always portrays as cold. The summer Anne spends in New York is "brutal and steaming" (156), she travels to Edinburgh in summer, and later lives in warm and sunny Los Angeles which is juxtaposed with New York's colorlessness (296). Tug's international aid work brings him to several warm locations in chapter eight entitled "Kigali, 1994."

[109] When Mitch returns to Montreal in August the city is "turgid with heat, empty of people" and the "cold nights of Iqaluit" are compared with the "dense, humid air" which causes him to sweat out "the poisons inside" during a run on the mountain (106). This is, however, the only (brief) warm description of Montreal, and, as noted here, a remarkably cold fall follows this scene only two weeks later.

(189). The next morning, the pale light is already described as "winter sun" (194) although it is still September. Ohlin both prolongs the cold spring in the 1996 narrative and accelerates the onslaught of cold rapidly in the fall of 2006. *Inside* thus asserts the total nordicity of Montreal. This is especially noticeable during Mitch's summer in Iqaluit, when the narrative is interrupted with repeated analepses to the winter in Montreal two years prior when he had met Martine. The use of flashbacks to an icy, cold winter in the city throughout the summer season in Iqaluit connotes Montreal as being colder than the Arctic. "Winter is overrepresented in the narratives and the summer season seems almost not to exist," write Hansson and Norberg in their study of literature about the North and South Poles (2009, 8), and this is also an accurate description of Ohlin's Montreal novel. This supports the claim that Montreal is the place in the world where polar influences descend the farthest south in the world, as discussed in chapter 2.2.1.

4.3.1 Heterotopias

Ohlin's novel is replete with heterotopic spaces, defined by Foucault, in chapter 1.3.3, as counter-sites in which other spaces in society "are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1984, 3). Significant for this discussion of the representation of cold, urban space, all of the heterotopias in *Inside* are indoor, artificially heated environments to which the characters flee from the cold. Ohlin turns expected and received notions of cold as negative, uncomfortable, and painful on their head, using heated public spaces as sites of injury and pain. The heated counter-sites are portrayed negatively in contrast to Montreal's fresh, natural, cold outdoor space.

After Mitch has been seeing Martine and her son Mathieu for two years, a rupture occurs in their relationship (March 2006). To escape the long, cold winter, like many of their colleagues who escape to Florida in March, the three of them visit the Biodôme, Montreal's large, indoor, zoological garden:[110] "After the cold outside, the warm, wet air made them feel like they were on holiday" (85). When told he cannot take a monkey back to their apartment "which was too cold" (86), Mathieu screams and flails wildly. In the chaos of trying to calm the boy, Mitch reaches out to grab him, accidentally dislocating Mathieu's shoulder, causing Martine to fall and sprain her ankle. Significantly, this incident occurs in the warmth of the Biodôme, depicted as an uncanny place unnatural to the city. The Biodôme is a space that is

[110] Although the Biodôme recreates five different North and South American ecosystems, including colder environments, Ohlin only portrays the tropical South American rainforest section of the Biodôme.

Other to Montreal's natural cold winter climate. The Biodôme conforms to Foucault's characteristics of a heterotopia in that it is a space which is perfectly ordered in contrast to the chaotic, uncontrollable winter weather in Montreal's authentic outdoor space. This incident is the beginning of the end of Mitch's relationship with Martine and Mathieu; the Biodôme is thus characterized as a site of pain and loss.

Mitch had spent the weekends with Martine and Mathieu going to museums, movies, and the planetarium (79), classic Foucauldian heterotopias of illusion. These sites are places of escape, subverting Montreal's cold winter space by providing a place to imagine one is somewhere else for a few hours. After his return to Montreal from Iqaluit (where he went to escape the tension between himself and Martine following the Biodôme incident), Mitch discovers his ex-wife Grace, whom he has not seen in a decade, is recovering from a serious car accident in the hospital where he works as a psychologist. Mitch begins to visit Grace and help her out around the house as she heals. Grace and her nine-year-old daughter Sarah (the result of her relationship with Tug), are a happy, secure family unit in contrast to the chaotic and fragile Martine-Mathieu pair. Contrary to Martine and Mathieu's structured weekends visiting heterotopias, Grace and Sarah prefer to stay home, read, or casually enjoy the outdoors. When Mitch suggests an itinerary of weekend activities, Grace declines, explaining, "'We're more like not-goers. Not-doers. Sometimes we go to the park'" (Ohlin 2012a, 326). Mitch accompanies them on a crisp fall day to a nearby park where Grace and Sarah run into friends and stand around talking in the cold wind. "Everyone else in the park was on the move: people throwing sticks for their dogs, toddlers careening around wildly while their parents chased after them, couples with their hands in each other's pockets. A Peruvian band was unpacking their flutes and drums. Despite the clouds, the atmosphere was festive and happy" (333). Cold and potentially gloomy weather is depicted as "festive and happy" as through Grace, Mitch, who had previously always disliked the cold and snow, is exposed to Montreal's natural, outdoor, cold spaces as potentially enjoyable.

Other heterotopic public spaces in the novel are the hospitals where Mitch works (sites of illness and pain, and Foucauldian heterotopias of deviance, see Foucault 1986) and two significant scenes in shopping malls. Shopping malls have been hailed by social, urban, and literary theorists "as primary public spaces of postmodernity" (Zukin 1995, 188). As introduced in chapter 1.3.3, shopping malls are "the ultimate heterotopian, phantasmagorical, enclosed, safe havens, the 'realized utopias' of the cult of today: shopping" (Kern 2008, 106). Zukin goes on to explain the importance of consumer culture to the public life of modern

cities: In shopping malls, one finds "consumption of a specific kind, in which the eye monopolizes sensory appetite and people sample among superficial sensations, the better to hide the stark loneliness and misery of the city under a facade of novelty luxury, and neon lights" (Zukin 1995, 188). Shopping malls are the quintessential heterotopias in cities today, spaces where illusions of wealth are presented to the devouring eyes of the public who attempt to distract themselves with "retail therapy," as the popular expression so aptly goes. For all kinds of people who spend time in shopping malls, whether "browsers, elderly joggers looking for a safe place to exercise, or teenagers who hang out in malls because they are suburbia's only public spaces" (especially in winter, I would add), the mall as a public space where they can get out of the house "connects them to society" (Zukin 1995, 189). Malls are often considered safe because they are patrolled by private security guards and, characteristic of heterotopias, they "work via mechanisms of in- and exclusion. They are public spaces, which are, however, not as freely accessible as other public spaces but instead rely on certain rules and rites" (Rosenthal 2011, 51–52). For example, if someone is behaving loudly or in any way bothering others, mall security can remove them, and a permit is needed to demonstrate, set up a stand, or hand out leaflets. Kern spells out the exclusionary, heterotopic nature of these semi-public city spaces:

> In the heterotopian world of the shopping mall, there is social homogeneity and social order. Private security services make sure that 'undesirables' are escorted out of the mall, protecting those deemed worthy through their behaviour and their appearance from having to encounter those portions of society that may be disturbing ñ the poor, rowdy teenagers, the politically volatile. Protecting them from contentious viewpoints ñ rallies, petitioners, religious zealots ñ as well. (Kern 2008, 106)

Ohlin's novel features two important scenes in upscale shopping malls, the Faubourg Ste-Catherine and the Promenades Cathédrale, real locations just 1.3 kilometers apart on Rue Ste-Catherine, downtown Montreal's main shopping street. These sites would presumably be warm, safe, and pleasurable places in which to gaze at and acquire fashionable consumer goods. Significantly, Ohlin undercuts the idea of the shopping mall as a safe place in a flashback to Annie's youth, revealed late in the novel. As a teenager in Montreal, Annie hangs out after school in the Faubourg Ste-Catherine mall "to avoid going home to her bickering parents" (298). She tries to bum a cigarette from a middle-aged francophone businessman in the food court, who is excited by her sixteen-year-old schoolgirl attire and the bloody, self-induced cuts on her belly. The man leads Annie to an empty part of the mall that is under

construction. She follows him hoping he will give her drugs, but he instead he quickly rapes her. "He never covered her mouth, nor did she call out for help. […] She had no practice in refusal" (300). The man is a violent flâneur who first observes Annie's long stay in the bathroom (where she cuts herself: "Then she'd go back out into the shopping center, feeling a little sticky, a little dirty. It was a trespass on the otherwise pristine routines of her life," 298), consumes her body through his eyes ("appraising her breasts with an old man's smile […] she could see him looking at her pleated skirt, her wool tights. The schoolgirl thing was such a cliché. They all went for it," 299), and then consumes her sexually ("he pulled down her tights and unbuckled his pants and suddenly he was inside her," 300). Sharon Zukin claims that "[t]here is no such contradictory figure [as the flâneur] in the malls" (Zukin 1995, 188), yet Ohlin creates a predatory, older man who like a flâneur observes, desires, and devours Annie. This is one of several traumatic teenage experiences Annie endures; after her pregnancy and abortion, she subsequently runs away from home to start a new life in New York City.[111]

The other shopping mall scene is in the final chapter of the novel, in the 2006 story line, when Mitch takes Grace and Sarah Christmas shopping at the Promenades Cathédrale. The mall is connected to Montreal's famous underground city, thirty kilometers of tunnels connecting shopping malls, condominiums, office buildings, universities, seven metro stations, and cultural sites. The impetus behind this network of tunnels connecting underground life with indoor access points to above-ground buildings is, of course, Montreal's cold winter climate. Mitch drives Sarah and Grace downtown because their car is not working. The three of them park and descend "down the long escalators into the underground city" (Ohlin 2012a, 339). This mall is depicted as hot, crowded, and stressful in the pre-Christmas rush.

> The neon-lit stores stretched endlessly, each a riot of shoppers, the air hot and close. From every store blasted a new carol. *Christmas is coming*, the Payolas sang wearily, *it ô been a long year*. Roving packs of teenagers were jostling around the kiosks. One of them, a boy, almost knocked Sarah over and when Mitch yelled at him he spun instantly away, muttering something. (339)

[111] Note that Annie is presented as an unreliable narrator who may lie, thus the details of her teenage years are difficult to piece together. She remembers the rape, a rebellious boyfriend, and her father as a potential child molester at different times, thus it is unclear by whom she was impregnated. Running away seems to be a result of the cumulative experiences she has in Montreal and the pressure she is put under by her parents to excel, as well as the impossibility of pleasing them. She identifies herself as someone who is "destined to keep leaving, over and over again" (304) as she later runs away from her successful television acting career.

In contrast to the shiny, positive illusion shopping malls want to present to their customers, Ohlin uses uniformly negative, chaotic verbs (stretched, blasted, jostling, knocked over, spun) to disorient the reader, as well as vivid descriptions inducing a state of fatigue, confusion, and oppressive warmth (riot of shoppers, hot and close, neon-lit, endlessly, wearily). The "roving packs of teenagers" metaphor associates them with a pack of predatory wolves, thus implying danger, especially to nine-year-old Sarah, from which Mitch protects her in a fatherly manner. The scene is all too realistic and familiar to pre-Christmas shoppers, especially those in cold climates where the outdoor winter temperatures contrast sharply with stuffy, overheated interiors. The cold outdoors cause one to wear heavy boots, coats, mittens, and hats and then drag them around the overheated mall. After wandering around with Sarah, "her coat unzipped" due to the oppressive heat, "she started to get cranky" (339), so Mitch takes her to the food court to rest (and cool off) with some ice cream while Grace "ran around picking up various purchases" (340). This time when Mitch visits a heterotopic indoor space with a single mother and her child, disaster does not strike. Although nothing violent or traumatic occurs, the shopping mall is a decidedly negative, tiring, stressful, and potentially dangerous place in contrast to the beautiful though cold outdoors. When Mitch, Grace, and Sarah leave the mall, "the day had fled and the streetlights picked out sparkles on the icy sidewalks" (341). The seasonal nordicity of the city is, again, portrayed as beautiful. As Sarah falls asleep in the back of the car with "the heat on high" against the cold (341), Mitch and Grace end up holding hands, "their gloved fingers intertwined" (342). The novel concludes with a glimmer of hope for them to form a tentative new family, Grace and Mitch standing on the icy street in front of her home: "She smiled at him in the winter dark, and then invited him inside" (342).

The "climate control and interior streets" of shopping malls are supposed to make "consumption a more individualistic experience" (Zukin 1995, 188), and presumably, a positive, comfortable, and enjoyable one, however Ohlin portrays the heated shopping mall as oppressive and dangerous in both scenes described above. The tropically warm Biodôme, likewise, also becomes confusing and chaotic when Mathieu tantrums and their visit results in injury, pain, and the end of Mitch's relationship with Martine and Mathieu. To close this sub-chapter, I posit that the heated, indoor, public spaces in *Inside*, are heterotopias negatively associated with warmth in contrast to the cold, positively connoted Montreal streets and parks.

4.3.2 “Just a small city”: Anglophone Space in Montreal

I will now examine the Montreal neighborhoods that Ohlin depicts, as well as the implications for the linguistic groups represented. Scholars of both English Canadian (Rosenthal 2011, 4) and Québécois (Morgan 2012, 120) urban fiction have noted that post-postmodern novels concentrate on human relationships and the emotional forces that make urban space, instead of showing a technocratic, commercialized, indifferent city. Alix Ohlin writes a cast of English-speaking main characters for *Inside* who inhabit the predominantly anglophone Montreal neighborhoods of Westmount, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, and the West Island.[112] Only secondary characters Martine and Mathieu are francophone, as well as some hospital staff and passersby. Ohlin locates her novel firmly in Montreal’s lived spaces, constantly naming streets, neighborhoods, and other landmarks recognizable to readers familiar with the city. Both Tug and Mitch walk the city in the cold (see chapter 1.3.2) and I would argue that Ohlin’s depiction of Montreal as an utterly *Nordic* city is reflected in the fact that Grace and Tug also *ski* the city as a means of making sense of their inner lives. This proves, as opposed to Edwards and Ivison’s claim elucidated in 2.4.1, that nordicity can and does co-exist with the city. The large, urban parks where they cross-country ski merge wilderness and urban space, and somewhat like the flâneur of modernist city fiction, Tug and Grace’s sense of awe and enjoyment of the pristine, snow-covered parks “uncovers the ‘hidden wonders’ of the urban realm” rather than maintaining an apathetic attitude towards the city (see Rosenthal 2011, 66). Cross-country skiing in large, urban, public parks thus provides an alternate reading of urban space, blurring the line between the wilderness and the city, the public and private.[113] While skiing on Mount Royal, Grace has “come across lovers naked to the sky, even on cold days” (Ohlin 2012a, 1), who thus perform the most intimate act in public, appropriating the city space as their own. For these lovers, as for Grace and Mathieu, the cold is not a deterrent but rather an enjoyable, energizing, or even liberating sensation.

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[112] There are also many references to English Canada in the novel, as various relatives of Tug, Grace, and Mitch, live(d) in Ontario, British Columbia, and Winnipeg. This reflects the reality that there is a strong connection between anglophone Montrealers and other Canadian provinces, especially Quebec’s neighboring province, Ontario, which is predominantly English-speaking. The characters, their partners, and relatives move back and forth between Ontario and Montreal. Grace grew up in “a leafy suburb of Toronto” and met Mitch at the University of Toronto before following him to Montreal where he had a residency and she enrolled in graduate school (20). Grace’s parents, doctors with a strong, happy marriage which Grace tries to imitate, retire and move to “an island off the coast of British Columbia, where her father worked on a novel, her mother made ceramics, and they still observed the white-wine ritual at five o’clock every day” (19), thus fulfilling a stereotypical Canadian retirement dream in its warmest microclimate. Mitch’s brother, Malcolm, as well as Tug’s parents and sister, all live in the Greater Toronto Area.

[113] Ohlin describes Mount Royal’s combination of nature and the urban on her blog: “The park was somehow both naturally beautiful and totally urban. All different kinds of people used it, in all different ways. You could buy drugs there (not saying I did this!), or join a drum circle, or jog or hike or just gaze down at the city, feeling like you owned it” (Ohlin 2012b; no pagination).

There are several references to francophones in *Inside*, and the occasional language barriers encountered in everyday life in the city, as well as the fluency many citizens have in both languages. In the opening pages of the novel, Grace accompanies Tug to the hospital after he first attempts to hang himself. Grace is having trouble getting past the "hostile, weary" (4) nurse when speaking English, but after she switches to French and informs the woman she is a therapist, she is able to see Tug: "'*Une psychologue?*' The nurse nodded, her manner softening at the French" (4). This brief interaction aptly represents a glimpse of daily life in the bilingual city: An anglophone's willingness to speak French softens relations and opens doors in many bureaucratic situations. Later, the doctor who listens to Tug's fanciful story about why he attempted suicide repeats him, "frowning skeptically. A francophone, possibly he thought he hadn't understood the story correctly" (7). These small, true-to-life details are what make an urban novel pulse with the lifeblood of the real city it represents.

The continual naming of streets anchors the characters of *Inside* in their distinctive Montreal neighborhoods. The night Mitch meets Martine they sleep together at her apartment, located "off of Pie-IX" (64), a boulevard that runs transversally north-south through the eastern end of the city. This locates the reader in a decidedly francophone part of town, the Hochelaga-Maisonneuve borough (70). The city of Montreal interacts with the characters: "Afterward [Mitch] stood shaking his head in the icy street. The road was deserted, dark. Above the cluster of apartment buildings to the east, the tower of the Olympic Stadium seemed to be saluting him" (64). Grace lives on Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and has her office on Côte-des-Neiges which, despite the streets' French names, situate her in a predominantly anglophone end of town, the borough named after the two streets. NDG, as Montrealers call it for short, is located next to Westmount,[114] which is known as the traditional enclave of wealthy, English-speaking Montrealers (it was once the wealthiest neighborhood in Canada).[115]

When Mitch is first given Grace's keys to help out at her apartment after her car accident in 2006, his route from the hospital is described. "He drove west along Sherbrooke, past the dark red turrets of the Westmount Library […]. He knew a lot of people who lived in this part of town but rarely socialized here, having peeled away a thin layer of his life a long

[114] The borough was an independent city until the island of Montreal was merged into one city in 2002. The citizens of Westmount protested to the merger and in 2006, after a change of government, Westmount regained its status as a city, although it shares much of its tax dollars with the agglomeration of Montreal, even after the demerger.

[115] Westmount is now, however, inhabited by upper middle-class people of various ethnic and linguistic origins, with the homes of the super-wealthy (such as the Bronfman and Molson families) at the top of the mountain, near The Boulevard.

time ago" (177). This is surprising since Mitch himself lives in Westmount (as is stated on page 323), but perhaps this is also a reflection of the interconnectedness and town-like feeling among anglophone Montrealers, who often do not integrate socially with francophones in the city, whereas Mitch has been involved with Martine on the other side of town for the past two years. Upon seeing each other again for the first time in a decade, Grace asks Mitch about his dating a lawyer (Martine, though by this point they have broken up) and he is surprised she had heard about this. "Grace's eyes sparkled at him. 'It's a small city. Somebody met her at a party'" (183−84). The spread of gossip in the anglophone Montreal community causes Mitch to agree, "it *was* a small city" (184). Ohlin thus equates English-speaking Montreal with a small town, in which everyone knows each other's business, yet amongst a bustling metropolis. Montreal in this way, too, is given a northern character, since the North has often been associated with the garrison mentality of a small, confined, repressive community (see chapter 3.2).

Martine's character represents all that is francophone, and how anglophones tend to perceive the Québécois: She is sophisticated, "sexy, and brilliantly smart" (63), and repeatedly referred to as being in a class above Mitch ("What she wanted, he thought, was for a better candidate to come along, but she'd take what she could get," 63). Fulfilling other francophone stereotypes, she smokes one du Maurier cigarette after another and is not shy sexually ("Martine […] saw no need to pretend not to know what she wanted," 64). As mentioned above, her apartment is located in a francophone neighborhood. Dating a French-speaking woman seems to be the fulfillment of a fantasy for Mitch: "with Martine he felt like he'd met a movie star" (70).

On her blog, Ohlin wrote about the delightful mélange of cultures and languages in Montreal, and the beautiful but complex relationship Montrealers have to language:

> In the park [Mount Royal], as everywhere in Montreal, you'd hear many languages—English and French, of course, and often the mid-sentence commingling of the two; but also Vietnamese, Chinese, Italian, Greek. More than any other place I know Montreal is a city where linguistic dexterity is on display. The politics of language in Quebec are intensely fraught; but there is also a beautiful fluidity and worldliness to this place where words and the culture they arise from are so prized. (Ohlin 2012b; no pagination)

Although neither national identity nor language politics are central issues to Ohlin's novel, she does use Montreal's unique mix of English and French to lend a local, true-to-life flavor to her Nordic narrative.

4.4 The Color of Cold

The novel's original cover art, a white snow globe on a pale blue background, which appeared on the American (Knopf) and Canadian (House of Anansi Press) editions of *Inside*, is, as Ohlin commented on the blog "Talking Covers," "the perfect visual metaphor for my book, which is very psychological, very much concerned with the 'interior weather' of the characters. You can *see* the landscape inside a snow globe, but you can't *get* there, so the image connotes both intimacy and separation" (Wilson 2013; no pagination).[116] "Cold" colors white and blue were the obvious choices for the designer after having read Ohlin's novel. All of the backup cover designs which designer Gabriele Wilson submitted also depict the novel's nordicity−a traffic cone almost obliterated by snow and a woman knee-deep in a snow bank.[117]

A select palette of colors are used in *Inside* to emphasize the influence of seasonal nordicity on the narrative. According to Daniel Chartier,

> the 'idea of North' is shaped by a simplification of colour, setting and landscape, a focus on a few colours – pastels, blue and orange, which signifies the presence of man—but, most importantly, on the strong symbolism of white which obliterates points of reference and threatens to absorb everything around it into the nothingness it represents. (Chartier 2007b, 43)

Grey, blue, and, of course, white, are the predominate colors of *Inside* (see Ohlin 2012a 66, 72, 76, 306, 323). Grace's "favorite colors, blues and pale greens" (196) are emphasized in her apartment décor. When Anne returns to New York in late fall of 2003 after her year in

[116] It is noteworthy that the cover art on the paperback edition of *Inside* published in Great Britain by Quercus does not succeed in capturing the spirit of the novel equally well. It depicts the novel as lighthearted "chick-lit" with its girlish font and three pastel-hued windows, looking in/out on a desk with liquor bottle, a snowy landscape, and the New York skyline, respectively. This flippant cover art seems especially unsuitable to the novel's subject matter, which is often anything but lighthearted, including divorce, deaths, suicides, the Rwandan genocide, and rape. The brief text on the back jacket describes the time periods and characters featured in the novel, but as for location only mentions Anne's "New York apartment." It is interesting that the Quercus marketing team removed all explicit references to Montreal and greatly minimizes the visualization of nordicity in the novel for their British readership, whereas in North America the nordicity of the novel seems to be a selling point. The German cover focuses on the inner lives of the characters, showing a dragonfly perched on a woman's naked upper back, visualizing the German title *In einer anderen Haut* (literally: In another's skin).

[117] These alternative cover designs can be viewed at Wilson 2013: http://talkingcovers.com/2013/03/28/inside/

California, she notes that the city is "void of the color that gave every day in California a sense of health and possibility" (296). When Grace drives to Tug's parents' house in Brantford, Ontario, in May 1996, after his death, "[t]he day was gray and drizzly. Grace felt a tightening in her chest, her heart seized by the dreary prettiness of the landscape. She crossed from Quebec into Ontario, the farms neat and well-tended, the fruit trees black in the rain" (306). The dreary colors and pathetic fallacy emphasize Grace's sadness. Only the obvious dabs of color "red barns," "yellow rain slicker," (306) add man-made artificial color to the natural landscape, as Chartier notes above. When Grace leaves Tug's parents, "the rain had stopped and the sky was pearled and gray" (319). The rain having let up and the evocation of the lustrous "nearly neutral slightly bluish medium gray"[118] color pearl foreshadow the growing hope and "sense of possibility" (320) Grace feels about becoming a mother as she moves forward "into the future, and the unknown" (320).

Ohlin herself explains in a blog article the color she associates with her novel, referring to her childhood synesthesia, a neurological condition causing her to see colors associated with certain objects. "When I was writing *Inside*, I struggled a lot with the structure and content of the book, but I always knew it was blue. Why? I'm not sure" (Ohlin 2012c; no pagination). Ohlin goes on to list a few influences that may have contributed to her association of blue with the novel: a Chagall poster hanging in her office, visiting galleries or museums while writing, and often referring to Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, "the cover of the edition I own is mostly blue." Lastly, Ohlin makes a connection between her novel and nordicity:

> While I wrote this book, on my mantel was a soapstone carving of an inukshuk that my parents gave me years ago. An inukshuk is a structure of stones in the shape of a human being. Inuit people use it to mark a trail, to show the path forward. It says, 'you are on the right track.' […] A section of my book takes place in Nunavut, where the Inuit live, but that's not because of the carving. I do think the color and shape of this object made its way into my book, hovering before my eyes […] It helped me not get lost. (Ohlin 2012c; no pagination)

The section of Ohlin's novel set in Iqaluit evokes the colors of Arctic summer. One can easily imagine the barren land: "gray slabs of rock," "sky was a brilliant blue," "rough, bruise-colored expanse of Frobisher Bay," "its white-crested waves crashing against the

[118] See definition of the color pearl at http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pearl

stubborn ice" (Ohlin 2012a, 66). As Mitch explores the town he takes in the summer colors: "It was cool and windy, the sky a range of grays from charcoal to steel to pearl […] with light green lichen spreading delicately over the rocks" (72). Grey is the drab color often associated with the North, as was also demonstrated in chapter 3 in Monique Proulx's *Les Aurores montréales* (1996) and Mavis Gallant's 1977 short story "The Doctor" (see Gallant 1996, 695). The Ice Storm of 1998 is also depicted by Proulx as "uniformly grey and cold" (Proulx 1999, 119) in her short story "Banana Chaudfroid," discussed in chapter 5.3, and Thien's Montreal in *Dogs at the Perimeter* is a drab, slushy grey and white in contrast to the vivid colors of the protagonist's past in Cambodia (see chapter 6.1).

The most striking use of white in Ohlin's novel occurs in Iqaluit, in Thomasie's account of his young sister Karen dying when their mother "'passed out in the snow'" (Ohlin 2012a, 75). Thomasie explains what his mother told him after the tragedy:

> 'When she woke up the world was white. That's what she said. My little sister died. They might send my mum to jail, but right now she's still in the hospital. She lost most of her eyesight, that's why the world was so white. They don't know what happened to her eyes. […] The world was white. It's weird that she says that because it was dark when she woke up. It was still winter, and anyways, she was blind.' (75−6)

Thomasie thrice repeats the phrase "the world was white"[119] in his traumatized account of his sister's death. Whiteness here evokes a feeling of emptiness, blankness, now that Karen has died. Thomasie admits to Mitch that he dreams of his sister calling for him to come and see her: "'I dream about her sometimes. She's alone in the snow. It's like she's in heaven – except not really, 'cause she's cold and uncomfortable" (76). Thomasie wrestles with feelings of guilt, wishing he could rescue and protect his sister. Ohlin here again associates cold and snow with death, loneliness, and being uncomfortable, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter in typical discourses of cold. Chartier explains that while white both "covering the city and Arctic ice plains—can depict lostness, emptiness and dizziness, it initially gives the characters in these novels a feeling of peace and calm" (Chartier 2007b, 45). This is evident in Thomasie's account of his dream in which Karen seems to have some kind of heavenly peace despite being "cold and uncomfortable." Chartier explains that "the initial peace gives way to a feeling of obliteration and fear of being 'swallowed' by the whiteness of the landscape" (Chartier 2007b, 46). Ultimately, the loss of his mother and Karen to the world

[119] One also wonders if there is a subtly implied reference here to white peoples' domination of the Inuit's world.

of white cause Thomasie to take his own life. The whiteness "obliterates the usual signs that enable man to find his way […] and he has the impression that he is being swallowed by nothingness" (Chartier 2007b, 46). This nothingness, the absence, pain, and loss of his mother and sister, swallows Thomasie as well.

Back in urban Montreal, Mitch describes his lonely, empty apartment and his future without a wife and children as "without color, without noise. Hopelessly quiet" (323) in stark comparison with his brother Malcolm's happy and boisterous home. This implied whiteness, this colorlessness, is a means of accentuating the anguish in Mitch's life and northifying Ohlin's narrative, as Chartier explains:

> In narratives and fiction on nordicity and wintricity, the very notion of 'whiteness' refers to an entire symbolic system based on observation of the real, but determined by many discursive layers comprising a coherent whole, which transcends forms and constitutes the 'idea of North' through its many elements, colours and figures. Here, 'white,' the screen for that imaginary world and mask that covers the ugliness, has an ethical and aesthetic value that simplifies the world while accentuating anguish and extremeness. (Chartier 2007b, 48)

4.5 Concluding Cold

Representations of nordicity in *Inside* focus on the effects of cold on the characters and on spatiality. Ohlin uses cold, snow, hockey, and the cold colors blue, grey, and white, to "northify" her novel. Montreal is portrayed by Ohlin as being a winter city, contrasting it with summer in other cities including Nunavut's capital, Iqaluit. As my study of a complex novel has shown, representations of cold in *Inside* sometimes conform to and at other times subvert received notions of cold as always being negative. Grace loves the cold, while Tug and Mathieu are impervious to it. After growing up in a family that hated snow and winter, Mitch begins to appreciate the positive possibilities of the cold at the end of the novel as he rekindles his relationship with Grace. Despite the cold, characters in Ohlin's novel spend a considerable amount of time outside skiing or walking the city. The cold thus does not isolate them nor restrict their movements. Outdoors in the cold is where Grace first meets Tug and where Mitch meets Martine. In Ohlin's Montreal, it is the heated, heterotopic spaces of the Biodôme and shopping malls that are negatively associated with violence and pain, while the cold spaces of Montreal are pleasurable, fresh, and invigorating as Grace and Tug ski in urban parks.

Ohlin does not engage with Quebec identity issues or the fraught language policies that often characterized anglophone Quebec fiction in the 1970s to 1990s. *Inside* features some francophone characters and bilingual, everyday interactions to simulate the uniqueness of Montreal and mark the novel as clearly Montreal fiction. The continual naming of real streets, neighborhoods, and other landmarks in the city make Montreal a breathing character in the story, rather than merely a backdrop. The motifs of seasonal nordicity saturate the novel, and the garrison mentality of anglophone Montreal belies the author's English Canadian heritage, as Ohlin herself agrees, "I do think that growing up in Canada, and Montreal in particular, has been a major influence on me ñ and on the language and aesthetics of my work" (A. Ohlin, pers. comm.). Ohlin uses seasonal nordicity to distinguish Montreal as a Nordic city, in contrast to the other cities which also appear in the novel (New York, Los Angeles, Kigali, Iqaluit, Edinburgh). Skiing or walking in the cold helps characters in *Inside* to wrestle with their complicated inner lives and come to important realizations or epiphanies, a motif we will continue to see throughout this text corpus.

5 The Color of Cold

Disasters, crises, and catastrophes have profound effects on a city, and literature is a means of shaping the collective memory of such an event. In January 1998, a massive Ice Storm debilitated a large swath of southern Quebec, eastern Ontario, and the northeastern United States, causing national emergencies to be declared on both sides of the border. This disaster and its costly effects served as a very real and recent reminder of the utter nordicity of these regions, which lie "south" of where many would traditionally position "the North," as I outlined in chapter 2 of this study. The Ice Storm of 1998 was an unusually devastating event beyond Montreal's typical winters. It was an intensification of the everyday experience, yet it gives insight into routine Montreal winters and the fundamental relationship between nordicity and the Québécois cultural identity. Despite much excellent work on representations of North and nordicity in Québécois literature, scholars have not yet explored the relationship between the Ice Storm of 1998 and cultural representations.

As Sherrill Grace noted in *Canada and the Idea of North*, published shortly after the Ice Storm, "the speed with which 'the Ice Storm' of 1998 has been incorporated into northern discourse" is a further reminder of Ontario and Quebec's "special claim to nordicity" (Grace 2001, 52). The Ice Storm was quickly represented in coffee table books of photographs and stories, fiction, and theater, and is still commonly referred to in the news and on the street almost 20 years later as each subsequent Ice Storm is compared to the great crisis of 1998 (as the disaster is called in French *la crise de verglas*). The Ice Storm was indeed a crisis, the worst "natural" disaster this city has known, a traumatic event for the people of Montreal. Alan Blum discusses the uniqueness of cities and touches on the significance of the Ice Storm for the city of Montreal. Blum argues that seemingly external events, such as the dismantling of the Berlin Wall for that city or the 1995 Quebec referendum for Montreal become

> 'internal' to the city's history and part of its fabric of collective experience, distinguishing residents of one city from the other and, so, marking their cities as different in kind and not simply in degree. The continuous dialectic between such external events and the social practices of city dwellers make and unmake the identity of the city as ongoing work-in-progress. […] part of the meaning of Montreal is exhibited in the ways it 'digests' or absorbs events such as the Referendum (or the Ice Storm) into the narrative fabric of its collective life. (Blum 2003, 42–43)

This chapter thus examines how Montreal fiction has "absorbed and digested" the Ice Storm of 1998, how the disaster is woven into the narrative fabric of Montreal, and how the social practices of city dwellers were affected by it.

In his handbook for mental health professionals, focusing especially on his experience with the trauma of 9/11, psychologist Jack Saul explains "an inevitable consequence of natural and human-caused disaster is what we refer to as 'collective trauma,' the shared injury to a population's social, cultural, and physical ecologies" (Saul 2014, 1). Saul argues that public spaces, communal activities, and collective narration are key to healing a community from trauma (Saul 2014, 2). The Ice Storm was a collective trauma that impacted all of Montreal, both the city as a whole and individuals. This chapter will analyze public spaces, communal activities, and narration in two fictional Ice Storm narratives, the short story "Banana Chaudfroid" by Monique Proulx (1999) and Pierre Szalowski's 2007 novel *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*. The Ice Storm changes the social practices of city-dwellers in both texts, forcing them to participate in communal activities with people whom they had never met, usually their own neighbors. Narrative, both the television news narratives represented within the texts, as well as the novel and short story themselves, participate in the healing process by shaping the collective memory of the Ice Storm. Lastly, public spaces are crucial in both Proulx's and Szalowski's texts as emergency shelters and even private homes become quasi-public spaces when they are shared by strangers. Foucault's notion of heterotopia can be applied to both the novel and short story to explore the spatiality of the Ice Storm that grips the city, and the appropriation of *space* by the characters to claim their own *place* in Montreal, as introduced in chapter 1.3.1.

The short story "Banana Chaudfroid" by Monique Proulx, originally written in French, was published in English translation by Matt Cohen in a collection of Canadian short stories to celebrate the new millennium entitled *Turn of the Story* (Proulx 1999).[120] Proulx's narrative is rich with imagery of the North in the city, and encompasses social and political critique,

[120] In the Matt Cohen archives at McMaster University, I was able to locate Proulx's original French notes which Cohen translated for the 1999 volume edited by Harms and Thomas, in which the story is entitled "Chaud-Froid de Bananes." Proulx wrote it soon after the Ice Storm, as Harms contacted Cohen via fax in July 1998 to ask him to translate the story. In the French journal *Littératures*, issue 42 of 2005 focuses on the contemporary Québécois *nouvelle* and includes the so-called *inédit*, that is "unpublished," version of Proulx's story in French. Here, the story is called "La vraie nature de l'eau" and includes two pages of supplementary text not included in Cohen's English translation of the story, from which more information can be gleaned about Gabrielle's house guests, why and how they feel about leaving, as will be discussed below; see Proulx 2005. In April 2015, after this study of the short story was initially written, Proulx published a new novel, *Ce qu'il me faut*, which contains a reprint of the story in French with only very minor changes. The chapter of the novel, also called "Chaud-Froid de Bananes," is a flashback in which the character now called "Gaby" recalls the Ice Storm of 1998.

fraught relationships, and class divides. Although Montreal is never explicitly named in the story, those familiar with the city and the Ice Storm of 1998 can recognize it.[121] The protagonist Gabrielle is a wealthy, single writer, living in the south of the Mile End neighborhood, near downtown Montreal.[122] While watching television coverage showing the city around her powerless as a result of the Ice Storm, Gabrielle "learns that she is living in an unaffected zone that is protected from this gangrene thanks to the fact that it is supplied by underground cables" (Proulx 1999, 116). Gabrielle abandons her writing during the Ice Storm and is glued to her television until she decides to take in a family of strangers from an emergency shelter.

In Pierre Szalowski's *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, an eleven-year-old, nameless boy is the primary narrator of the novel,[123] while other chapters are told from a third-person narrator focalized through various neighbors. The boy's parents, Anne and Martin, tell him after a tense Christmas season, on January 5, 1998, that they will get a divorce. Heartbroken and feeling totally disregarded by their decision, the boy pleads with the sky to help him. The response: a disaster which the boy believes he has summoned and controls. Over the ensuing days, the ice not only transforms the boy's parents but also helps each of the other neighbors to change for the better. This disaster has purely good intentions all around in Szalowski's novel. Julie, the alluring stripper with a tender heart who lives across the street, takes in her Russian neighbor, Boris, when his electricity goes out. They save his fish in her bath tub, whose water must be kept at exactly 32 degrees Celsius so as not to ruin his PhD thesis examining their swimming patterns. After only a few days they fall in love, Julie quits her job high-paying at the strip club and Boris realizes there is life beyond his research. In the end, they marry, move to Westmount, a wealthy and historically anglophone neighborhood, have three children, he becomes a successful professor at the elite anglophone McGill University and she his straight-laced secretary. The boy's best friend, Alex, a troubled child and school bully, and his father Alexis, a drunken lay about who neglects his son, also lose their electricity. They are offered shelter by Michel and Simon, the gay couple next door

[121] The fact that the city is an island, connected by bridges to the mainland, is mentioned in Proulx 1999, 123.

[122] Proulx confirmed that Gabrielle lives in Mile End at a book signing in May 2015, shortly after the release of her novel *C e q u ô i l . r e s t e d e m o i*

[123] The self-referential, homodiegetic narrator reveals his motives for writing his story on the last page of the novel, an epilogue of sorts occurring nine years after the Ice Storm of 1998: "I haven't told you my name. Now that we're on the last page it really doesn't matter. I just wanted to remember that January in 1998, and everything that it inspired in me, so that my story can belong to all the children who would like to make themselves heard" (Szalowski 2012, 246). Szalowski plays with his own non-use of the boy's name when the boy reacts to his mother calling him "mon chéri." "Pourquoi elle m'appelait 'mon chéri'? Elle ne m'avait jamais appelé comme ça. J'ai un prénom quand même!" (Szalowski 2007, 98) Translation: "Why was she calling me 'darling'? She never called me that. I have a name, after all!" (Szalowski 2012, 79)

who have been pretending they are brothers for a decade. By the end of the novel Alexis has dealt with his demons, gotten over his prejudices against Jews and gays, and reconciled with the boy's estranged mother. Michel and Simon come out and live in harmony with themselves, their colleagues, and neighbors.

Two Ice Storm novels just published in 2015, *La tempête* by Gabriel Anctil[124] and Monique Proulx's *Ce qu'il reste de moi* (which contains a French version of the story "Banana Chaudfroid" as one chapter entitled "Chaud-Froid de Bananes") highlight the absolutely relevant and ongoing influence of the 1998 event on Quebec's cultural imaginary and literary productions today.[125] To my knowledge, the only other fictional representations of the Ice Storm of 1998 published thus far are juvenile fiction, *Ice Storm* by Penny Draper (2011)[126] and Gilles Tibo's *Noémie, Le château de glace* (1998).[127] Note that there exist numerous photographic accounts of the Ice Storm, such as coffee table books and compilations of interviews. Playwright Steven Orlov also wrote a play entitled *Freeze* originally performed at Montreal's Centaur theatre in 2002.[128] Thus, the two texts I introduce here are a significant part of this corpus on the Ice Storm, and they are also seldom studied examples of the discourse of nordicity in Montreal. Before diving more deeply into the literature, I will begin by reviewing the damage caused by the Ice Storm of 1998, focusing in particular on the island of Montreal.

5.1 The Ice Storm of 1998

Although freezing rain is common in southern Quebec, eastern Ontario, and the northeastern United States, between January 4 and 10, 1998 the region was blasted with three successive waves of freezing rain which deposited 100 millimeters of ice on the Montreal area (the previous largest Ice Storms had left only 20−40 millimeters of ice). There are differences in opinion as to what weather phenomenon produced the unusually severe Ice Storm of 1998. In *Leadership in Disaster: Learning for a Future with Global Climate Change*, Raymond

[124] I became aware of Anctil's recent Ice Storm novel in September 2015, thus I was not able to include it in my text corpus.
[125] Larry Tremblay's 2002 novel *Le mangeur de bicyclette* also features the Ice Storm in its final chapter.
[126] In Draper's novel, two twelve-year-old cousins are challenged to perform heroic acts to help others during the Ice Storm. Sophie, a francophone girl, helps her parents save their dairy farm in the countryside, while Alice, an anglophone figure-skater in Montreal, faces the disaster alone and helps an injured neighbor.
[127] Tibo's youth novel is the sixth in the Noémie series; the protagonist is a young girl who endures the Ice Storm with her nanny Madame Lumbago. Similar to Szalowski's novel, two neighbors fall in love at the end.
[128] In Orlov's two-act comedy, five spirited characters from different walks of life converge in one Montreal duplex. "The play dramatizes allegorically the historic ice storm as a metaphor for 'cooler' more tolerant times in Quebec compared to the political 'heat' of the late 60s, 70s and early 80s," see Orlov 2002.

Murphy claims it was caused by "warm, moist air, resulting from the El Niño phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean, that was carried by wind currents across to the other side of the continent" (Murphy 2009, 4), while Stephen Doheny-Farina in *The Grid and the Village: Losing Electricity, Finding Community, Surviving Disaster* (2001) reports that the Ice Storm began when a low-pressure warm front from the Gulf of Mexico and an Arctic cold front moved in simultaneously. When the air masses collided, the warm air rose, keeping the cold air down. There was little wind to disrupt the patterns and no sun to thaw the ice between downpours.

The ice began to fall on January 5: power outages began and schools were closed on what was meant to be the first day back after the Christmas break. Emergency response plans began to be enacted as power outages continued to expand in scope. On January 8, the Ice Storm intensified. Six deaths due to the disaster had already occurred in Canada, and a hundred people were treated for carbon monoxide poisoning. For a second day, more than 400,000 homes in the Montreal region were without power. On January 11, more than 3 million people were now without power and the number of people in shelters more than doubled between Friday, January ninth to Sunday the eleventh. The city of Montreal went dark for four days. The airport and bridges which link the island to the mainland were closed, turning the frozen city into a prison. Power distribution towers crumpled under the weight of the ice, and thousands of people fled their dangerously cold homes. In his personal account and scholarly analysis of the disaster, Doheny-Farina, who lives in New York State's sparsely populated borderlands known as the "north country" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 7), explains the scope of the disaster: "From Lake Ontario to the North Atlantic there were thousands of shelters and millions of people without power. National emergencies were declared on both sides of the border. Utility crews were driving from all across both countries to enter this vast zone of darkness" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 126). Linemen who had worked to repair electricity in hurricane-devastated areas commented that they had "never experienced the kind of widespread destruction they saw across the region" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 147). It took until February 8, more than a month after the disaster first hit, for power to be restored to all homes in Quebec's so-called "triangle of darkness" in the Montérégie region south of Montreal (Doheny-Farina 2001, 146).

In the end, the power outage lasted thirty-three days in Canada and involved the largest peacetime mobilization of military troops in Canadian history. More than 1,300 steel towers were damaged. Dairy and maple syrup farmers suffered millions of dollars in losses. There were at least seven hundred emergency shelters set up; power outages affected 5

million people; at least thirty-five people were killed by Ice Storm-related house fires, hypothermia, falling ice, and carbon-monoxide poisoning caused by using camp stoves to cook indoors. The cost of the damage on both sides of the border totaled 2.5 billion US dollars (Doheny-Farina 2001, 157–58).[129]

5.1.1 A Natural Disaster?

The word disaster stems from the French *désastré* ("disastered"), which was derived from the Italian *dis-astrato* and "has its own distinctive origin, associating misfortune with the loss of a protective star, with being abandoned by the stars and left to one's miserable fate among countless perils and calamities. […] The word is thus directly related to disorders of uncommon magnitude: the destruction, despair, and chaos resulting from the distant power of cosmic agencies" (Huet 2012, 3–4). Environmental geographers and scholars of environmental justice generally accept that there is no such thing as a "natural" disaster. The systematic way in which disasters most severely affect the poor and racial minorities cannot, many argue, be termed natural.[130] Additionally, humans have so altered the planet that the recent increase in devastating weather events can be directly linked to human causes. In an article in The International Geosphere–Biosphere Programme Newsletter in May 2000, atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and biologist Eugene Stoermer coined the term "Anthropocene" to describe the geological epoch we currently find ourselves in, denoting how human activity has changed the earth's life support system (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000).[131] In his study of leaders' responses to the Ice Storm of 1998, Murphy argues: "Nature unleashes its independent, emergent dynamics within societies instead of within virgin wilderness precisely because human activities have expanded and affect all the biosphere" (Murphy 2009, 35). Murphy reminds that although the 1998 Ice Storm was "not caused by global warming, the weather event examined here could well be a harbinger of life under it" (Murphy 2009, 6). He argues that the Ice Storm was only able to have such a disastrous effect on Montreal and the surrounding regions because of our contemporary over-dependence on the electrical grid, meaning that the disaster was not truly natural: "Vulnerability to nature's forces was constructed, and a natural disaster was manufactured by humans because of that

[129] For more details about damages inflicted by the Ice Storm in both Canada and the United States, see Doheny-Farina 2001, 157–58.
[130] See *There is No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster: Race, Class, and Hurricane Katrina*, Hartman and Squires 2006.
[131] See the definition of Anthropocene at "Welcome to the Anthropocene" http://www.anthropocene.info: "The 'Anthropocene' is a term […] to denote the present time interval, in which many geologically significant conditions and processes are profoundly altered by human activities."

dependence" (Murphy 2009, 5). Murphy vigorously reminds those people living in cold, northern climates that they have tried to escape the North, insulating themselves from the climate in which they live. But nordicity is still a very real, felt presence:

> Citizens who live in northeastern North America take for granted that technology and, behind it, science and reason make their lives largely exempt from the rigours of the cold, dark winter environment in which they reside. Modern heating, lighting, transportation, and appliances enable them to go from the climate-controlled micro-environment of their homes in the comfort of their heated automobiles to a well-equipped office and often to enjoy the amenities of a warm shopping centre on the way home. Farmers depend upon mechanical slaves energized by electricity in their barns to feed the urban population freed from the land and manual labour. Contact with nature has for the majority of the population been reduced to leisure activity. (Murphy 2009, 57)

The object of Murphy's book is to call into question "two misleading oversimplifications common in the cultures of modern societies: an idealized representation of nature and wishful thinking concerning the outcome of technological development" (Murphy 2009, 6). The Ice Storm of 1998 jolted many people back into contact with the formidable and powerful force of the North.

Stephen Doheny-Farina's 2001 book *The Grid and the Village* is centered on his home in the countryside near Potsdam, New York, 170 kilometers south of Montreal. Doheny-Farina shares his own family's experience of the Ice Storm, in which they and their neighbors help each other to survive the disaster and keep their pipes from freezing after they all lose power and heat. They share childcare duties in the one home which has a generator and cook together outside on camping stoves. Doheny-Farina's book is based on numerous interviews he conducted after the disaster as well as research into the creation of the power grid, and provides a rounded portrait of one town's experience of and response to the Ice Storm, while also contextualizing it within the entire borderlands region affected. Telling of a house fire prior to the Ice Storm which led him and several neighbors to remove the wood burning stoves from their homes, thus becoming completely reliant on electricity for heating, Doheny-Farina reminds that "for many of us, it takes the sudden loss of electric power to awaken us to the fragility of the power grid. The stories in this book remind us how vulnerable we are as the demand for power keeps increasing" (Doheny-Farina 2001, x).

In a caption under a well-known photograph by Benoit Aquin of a collapsed power line resulting from the Ice Storm of 1998, Sherrill Grace notes, "Aquin's images function as powerful *aides mémoires* of Canadian nordicity, which reaches down to our southern borders, and of our vulnerability, despite sophisticated technology" (Grace 2001, 31). During the Ice Storm, thousands of electric towers and poles crumpled under the weight of the ice, proving again that the North is an intrinsic part of even southern Canada. As Doheny-Farina eloquently states, "Somewhere in that forest of towers, the ice had triumphed over design" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 71). Contemporary Canadian and US American society lives largely in comfort, attempting to both ignore and escape the cold (central heating systems, warm cars, warm homes, warm workplaces) and master it for our own benefit (the refrigerator, air conditioning).[132] The Ice Storm of 1998 was thus a significant wake-up call, reminding those who experienced it of the true nordicity of the place in which they live. I turn now to two other powerful *aides mémoires*, fictional texts that preserve the Ice Storm in the collective cultural memory of Montreal.

5.2 Neighborhood Warming: Cold as Catalyst for Changing Social Practices in Pierre Szalowski ô *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*

Szalowski's novel *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* looks back fondly on the Ice Storm as an extraordinary community-building event. The title prominence of the word *froid* or "cold" in the English translation of the novel published in 2012 in the United Kingdom by Canongate, *Fish Change Direction in Cold Weather*, immediately draws our attention to the importance of cold in the novel.[133] Cold, however, is more often implied than actually described – in fact, many of the characters do not seem to feel cold at all. Thus, the cold is nearly invisible in the novel, yet it profoundly changes all of the characters.

The boy-narrator is frustrated to see that within its first few days, the Ice Storm only transforms his neighbors and not his parents. The swimming patterns of Boris's fish parallel

[132] "The spread of electrification enabled a retreat from the city; it enabled homes to exist outside of the urban service center. Home refrigerators, for example, severed the connection to the ice deliveries available in the urban centers as well as the need to live within walking distance of grocery stores" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 27).

[133] The English version of Szalowski's novel is translated into a noticeably British English, using colloquialisms foreign to English speakers in Montreal where the novel is set, and Canadians at large. This is reminiscent of problems anglophone Montreal writers have had getting their books translated into French and published in Quebec, such as Mordecai Richler in the 1970s. Lee Skallerup claims that Richler's oeuvre would have had to come to the francophone Québécois reading public via Paris for him to have been considered as one of their own (see Leclerc and Simon 2005, 24–25). The translation of Szalowski's novel by Alison Anderson feels inauthentic and is too literally translated from the French, without maintaining any local flair.

the activities of the human characters, all neighbors who carry out individualistic, isolated lives at the outset of the novel. Despite living next door or across the street from one another in duplexes with exterior staircases leading to each front door the neighbors have never met or spoken before the uncanny Ice Storm changes their routines. Renowned twentieth century urban theorist Jane Jacobs blames such isolation on a lack of public spaces in which people can engage in casual, social relationships.

> The more common outcome in cities, where people are faced with the choice of sharing much or nothing, is nothing. In city areas that lack a natural and casual public life, it is common for residents to isolate themselves from each other to a fantastic degree. If mere contact with your neighbors threatens to entangle you in their private lives, or entangle them in yours, and if you cannot be so careful who your neighbors are as self-selected upper-middle-class people can be, the logical solution is absolutely to avoid friendliness or casual offers of help. Better to stay thoroughly distant. (Jacobs 1992 [1961], 65)

Szalowski does not mention any public spaces in his characters' neighborhood as they all keep to themselves and go straight home. At the start of the novel, even the children are isolated from their parents: Alex's father will not talk to him about his mother or explain why she abandoned the family. When school is canceled part way through the first morning after the Christmas holidays due to the falling ice, the narrator returns to find his father just leaving the family home with packed suitcases, as he is separating from his wife. The boy says goodbye and is left home alone: "Quand je suis rentré chez moi, ma mère n'était pas là. Alors, seul dans ma chambre, j'ai passé l'après-midi à regarder la glace tomber" (Szalowski 2007, 84).[134] This melancholic image symbolizes the boy's feelings of abandonment and emotional separation from his parents. The narrator and his best friend Alex often hang around on the street observing the neighborhood and talking. Despite being the dead of winter in Montreal, and in the midst of a serious Ice Storm, there is never mention of them feeling cold while they chat outdoors, or the cold being the reason that they go inside. They seem to be oblivious to cold temperatures. Twice Julie's cat gets out of the house and different characters mention that the cat is getting cold (see Szalowski 2007, 29 and 111) but never the humans, who continue their conversations.

[134] Translation: "When I got home, my mother wasn't there. So I spent the afternoon alone in my room, watching the ice come down" (Szalowski 2012, 67).

During a pivotal scene a few days into the Ice Storm, Boris and Julie go outside to collect snow to melt for drinking water, because the water purification plant has lost power and can no longer filter Montreal's tap water. A huge, ice-laden tree branch falls on them and pins them to the ground. Typical of Szalowski's jovial style, this actually dangerous situation which could result in loss of life or serious injury is told in a light-hearted manner, with Julie singing deliriously and Boris becoming aroused by her. Boris does mention that it is starting to get cold, however after they are finally freed from the branch by Alexis, Simon, Michel, and Martin, they all stand around introducing themselves and talking in a relaxed manner, with no reference to being cold again. This is reminiscent of Tug and Mathieu in Ohlin's *Inside*, as discussed in chapter 4.2.1, who both do not seem to notice the cold. The inability of the cold to affect Tug seems to be a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, while Mathieu experiences sensory stimulation differently due to Asperger's Syndrome. In *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, on the other hand, the characters are rather too preoccupied with the excitement of the uncanny Ice Storm and their new-found social relationships to feel noticeably cold.

After meeting by the fallen branch, all of the neighbors gather for the first time at Simon and Michel's apartment for a party, apologies are made, and Martin comments: "C'est fou d'avoir attendu qu'un tel malheur nous tombe dessus pour se parler enfin" (Szalowski 2007, 221).[135] In the midst of their dance party, the power suddenly goes out, thus all the remaining homes on the street are also plunged into the darkness and the cold. The adults begin to think of others less fortunate than themselves who are struggling to survive the Ice Storm. Even Boris neglects his fish in favor of helping to evacuate the elderly from the senior's home next door. The narrator's father Martin, a policeman who in recent years had withdrawn from active duty to teach at the academy and passively spent much of his free time watching television, rediscovers his leadership skills and manly heroism. He directs his tipsy, jolly crew of neighbors, who successfully and quickly evacuate the senior's home, to the amazement of the police chief on duty who was having difficulty completing the same task. During this rather long process the cold is not mentioned, and the seniors are cheerful, spinning their wheelchairs on the ice, singing, and waging bets about who will next emerge from the building.

[135] Translation: "It's crazy that it's taken a disaster like this for us to finally get to know each other" (Szalowski 2012, 188).

The Ice Storm finally comes to the boy's rescue by changing his parents. Having gone alone to the family's chalet for two days, the Ice Storm had "frozen" Martin, shaking him out of his routine habits and reminding him why he loves his wife and his job. While trying to de-ice the chalet's roof, Martin falls off and breaks both of his arms, forcing him to return to his family's home with both arms in casts. His son notices his father's personality has drastically changed after being "frozen." "Deux jours dans le froid, ça avait transformé mon père. Je ne le reconnaissais plus. Il arrivait même à se moquer de lui. Ça devait être une des vertus de la congélation. Une fois remis à température, il n'y avait que de la joie" (Szalowski 2007, 197).[136] Martin immediately starts to flirt with his wife, Anne, upon his return and pretends to need her help with bathing and eating so as to draw closer to her. The boy realizes that his mother has not yet been "frozen" and she would not change until the cold did its work on her as well (see Szalowski 2007, 207 for the French version and 2012, 175 for the English). Thus Szalowski inverts the common representation of frozenness or frigidity in literature as a negative characteristic, especially in women, by using it here to bring about positive personal transformation and renewal of a romantic relationship.

Martin's kindness, jovial personality, and heroic leadership at the senior's home revive Anne's interest in her husband. That night, their home too loses power and the cold creeps in. Huddled in the dark in front of the fireplace, they whisper about the changes taking place in Martin while their son pretends to sleep nearby. Anne reminds her husband that it is only because of the Ice Storm that he has changed. Martin gives full credit to the Ice Storm for reawakening him to what really matters and realigning his priorities.

> 'C'est la perte momentanée des habitudes...des mauvaises, celles qui t'obstruent la vue…qui te rendent passif…qui font qu'au bout d'un moment tu n'es plus le même. Tu essayes alors de te souvenir de qui tu étais. On peut dire que d'avoir froid, ça m'a rafraîchi la mémoire.' Les vertus de la congélation! (Szalowski 2007, 252, ellipses in original)[137]

Thus the cold is attributed with the power to bring about positive change in the characters' lives. During the night the boy awakens and sees his parents sleeping in a tight embrace in front of the fireplace where they tried to keep warm: "Ils avaient froid. Je n'ai pas remis de

[136] Translation: "Two days in the cold weather had transformed my dad. I didn't recognize him. He was even managing to poke fun at himself. That must be one of the virtues of being deep-frozen. Once you thaw out, there's nothing left but joy" (Szalowski 2012, 166).

[137] Translation: "'It's because we've temporarily lost our routine, and all our bad habits, the ones that keep you from seeing, that make you passive. After a while you have to try to remember who you were. I tell you, being cold refreshed my memory.' The virtues of being deep-frozen!" (Szalowski 2012, 214)

bûche dans le feu" (Szalowski 2007, 254).[138] Their son is happy that it is still cold in his apartment, as the ice had to finish its work in his family. The next day, Anne and Martin announce that they will not get divorced, and Julie makes a scientific observation which saves Boris's research.

The water in the fish tank has lowered to 19 degrees since the power in her apartment went out and the four fish are now swimming in new patterns: They have changed direction in cold water. Julie notices, "Quand il fait froid, ils se rapprochent les uns des autres! […] Et pis ils nagent deux par deux, comme s'ils étaient des couples. Ce n'est plus seuls, en évitant les autres, qu'ils tracent leurs chemins. C'est ensemble qu'ils le font… Pis c'est depuis qu'ils ont froid qu'ils sont comme ça…'" (Szalowski 2007, 259, ellipses in original).[139] Cold is thus depicted as a positive force throughout the novel, causing both fish and humans to abandon their isolated, individualistic daily patterns, get closer together, and depend on one another. The cold changes their social practices, leading them to reconcile relationships, make new friends, and conceive babies (both Anne and Martin and Julie and Boris have baby girls nine months later). The uncanny Ice Storm disrupts the city's everyday routines and causes the urbanites to need each other, thus transgressing the boundaries of typical urban isolation.

5.2.1 Integrating Immigrants: Hockey and the Cold

Ice hockey again plays a role in this novel, as it does in Ohlin's *Inside*, as a signifier of Quebec as a Nordic culture. Boris Bogdanov first came to Quebec from Russia in 1990 at the age of eighteen to play in the Quebec junior hockey league, "dreaming of changing his life on the ice of Quebec's arenas" (Szalowski 2012, 22). He was given a chance to play in Val d'Or, a remote mining town in Quebec's northwestern Abitibi-Témiscamingue region. Boris, who was a timid player, was crushed by "un gros boeuf de l'Alberta […] une montagne de muscles" (Szalowski 2007, 35),[140] within his first forty-five seconds on the ice, thus ending his career. Similar to *Inside* (see chapter 4.2.2) hockey is again a form of escape in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*; this time it is Boris's chance to escape Communist Russia and to have a better life in Quebec, where he goes on to excel in mathematics.

[138] Translation: "They were cold. I didn't put any more logs on the fire" (Szalowski 2012, 216).
[139] Translation: "When it's cold, they get closer to each other.' […] 'And they're swimming two by two, in pairs. They're no longer plotting their course individually, avoiding the others. They're doing it together. And it's just since they got cold that they've been like this'" (Szalowski 2012, 220-221).
[140] Translation: "a big beefy player from Alberta […] this muscle-mountain" (Szalowski 2012, 23), a pun referring to Alberta's beef cattle industry and the Rocky Mountains.

The presence of a Russian character in the novel functions as a means of northifying the work by implying a connection between Montreal and another cold, wintery culture.[141] This invocation of the circumpolar North is a trope often present in English Canadian and Québécois literature, although it is more often Scandinavia that is referenced in order to assert Canada or Quebec's northernness.[142] As discussed in chapter 2.4.2.1, a love of the cold has often been used in Québécois fiction to indicate the successful integration of immigrant characters in Quebec society (Chartier 2008a, 240), thus Boris is already a perfect candidate for integration as he comes "from the cold" (Szalowski 2012, 150). There are many stereotypes about Russians perpetuated in Szalowski's novel,[143] and although written in a light-hearted manner, Szalowski takes issue with the perils of being an immigrant in Quebec, and Boris' individual rights versus Quebec's collective mentality. When Boris goes to the hardware store "Canada Dépôt," a play on the two large home improvement stores Canadian Tire and Home Depot, to stock up on gas canisters to keep his fish's water warm, he is rebuked by the store manager in front of a group of Québécois for putting twenty-five canisters in his cart, and he is told he can only buy two cans.[144] Boris appeals to his freedom in Canada and claims he has the right to buy as many as he wants:

> —Je suis un Canadien libre!
>
> —S'tie d'tabarnac ! Tu peux être un Canadien libre si tu veux, mais avant ça, tu vas être un Québécois solidaire !
>
> […] Boris, avec son accent russe, a tout dit, mais ça n'était pas le bon accent le jour de la grande solidarité québécoise. (Szalowski 2007, 92–93)[145]

Later, Boris chooses to help evacuate the senior's home rather than tend to his fish tank out of a sense of solidarity with other Québécois. "He raised his chin, as proud as only a Russian can

[141] There are two connections to Alberta, another cold and snowy Canadian province, in the novel also. The President of the Mathematical Society of Canada, based in Calgary, Alberta, "a very cold place," is also interested in Boris's fish theory (Szalowski 2012, 25), as well as the hockey incident mentioned above.
[142] As is pointed out, respectively, by R. Shields 1991, 9 and Chartier 2007c, 45.
[143] For example, "Russians, whether they are researchers or hockey players, think of each drink as nothing more than a port of call on the way to the next glass" (Szalowski 2012, 107).
[144] Doheny-Farina's account reminds us that Szalowski's fictional portrayal of Boris's concern for his fish must have been a frequently experienced phenomena, as one of his interviewees, Judy Funston, "was worried about her fish […] Her first concern was the aquarium. How long could it remain viable as the temperatures dropped and the oxygenator lay inoperable? A neighbor who had helped her out at times in the past saw her outside on the road in tears" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 71). This neighbor had a generator running at his house and offered to take in both Judy and her fish.
[145] Translation: "'I'm a free Canadian!' 'Like hell you are! You can be a free Canadian all you want, but first you've got to show some solidarity with your fellow Quebeckers!' […] Boris poured his heart out, but his Russian accent wasn't welcome on this day of great Quebecker solidarity" (Szalowski 2012, 75−76).

be. 'We Quebeckers stick together!'" (Szalowski 2012, 202) Thus, it is the Ice Storm, a period of intensified seasonal nordicity, which brings about a Russian immigrant's full integration: Boris is accepted into Quebec society at last *because of* the Ice Storm, thus asserting his own sense of place in the city space.

5.2.2 Space in the Disaster City

Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons takes place "nowhere and everywhere in Montreal" (Szalowski 2012, 2). Although Szalowski explicitly names Montreal in the paratext, he has left the precise location within the city purposefully vague to give the impression that this Ice Storm experience was common to all *montréalais*. Szalowski's everyman story does not, however, include anglophone Montrealers. There are no English-speaking characters at all in the novel, just a few specific references to identifiable places in Montreal that are light-hearted jabs at anglophones.[146] The characters spend almost the entire novel in their unnamed street and their private homes, with brief scenes in the public spaces of the boys' school (within walking distance), the senior's home (next door), and the hardware store. This focus on microspaces within the city is in keeping with the trend observed by Ceri Morgan in francophone Montreal novels of the twenty-first century that focus in on the personal and small, local places as a counter response to a globalized, hyper mediated world (Morgan 2012, 121). In Szalowski's novel, the homes are likely duplexes, with several references to outdoor stairs leading directly to each apartment suggesting typical Montreal architecture located in the predominantly francophone east of the city (Morgan 2012, 130).[147] The homes are a refuge for the characters in which, at the start of the novel, they isolate themselves from one another. When their electricity goes out, the cold slowly begins to encroach on each of them. It forces them to transgress the boundaries of urban isolation and actually speak to the people they see every day, crossing the thresholds of each other's homes and thus becoming more intimate with one another. In his real-life account, Doheny-Farina also cherished how the Ice Storm broke down inhibitions and property boundaries between his

[146] Martin, the policeman, gives out tickets to rich ladies lunching on avenue Laurier in the traditionally anglophone Outremont neighborhood (Szalowski 2012, 4). In the epilogue nine years later, Julie and Boris have married and he becomes a professor at English-speaking McGill University. Julie, the francophone former exotic dancer, becomes "a fine Westmount lady, living in a huge house with a lawn imported from London and maintained by a gardener who speaks only English" (Szalowski 2012, 244).

[147] Another small clue as to the location of Szalowski's novel is found in the epilogue, in which it is mentioned that the two girls conceived during the Ice Storm were both born at the Sainte-Justine Hospital (Szalowski 2007, 285 and 2012, 242). The *Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine* is a teaching hospital specializing in mother and children's health. It is located on the northern side of Mount Royal and is associated with the francophone Université de Montréal.

family and his neighbors: “No one needed to knock; the houses had all become public places for the four families” (Doheny-Farina 2001, 135). During the Ice Storm, previously private homes became public spaces allowing for increased contact between neighbors. After several days, all of the homes in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* lose their electricity and there is nowhere else to go. Yet this is not portrayed as a dire, negative circumstance by Szalowski. The cold acts, rather, as the catalyst for positive change in each of the characters’ lives. Contrary to common associations between cold and death or suffering, as outlined in chapter 4.1, in Szalowski’s novel the cold Ice Storm has purely positive consequences on all of the characters. Even those who are injured due to falling on the ice (Martin, as well as the principal of the local school) are rewarded with romantic relationships following their injuries.

Representations of cold in Szalowski’s *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* focus in on the effects of cold on personal relationships and on the urban spaces that the characters frequent. Despite the cold, the characters in the novel spend a considerable amount of time outside talking on the street. Just as in Ohlin’s *Inside*, the Ice Storm does not completely isolate them nor restrict their movements. In fact the cold—specifically the lack of heat and light when the power goes out—is what brings the characters of *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* together, although they do not really notice the cold even as it is working to change them for the better.

5.3 Mediating Disaster: Television in Po

Both fictional narratives of the Ice Storm feature television news coverage as mediating the experience of the disaster for the characters who are themselves living through it. Usually during a disaster or other major event people look to the television news to interpret their experience for them, to tell them how they should think about it. Doheny-Farina comments,

> Disasters are full of good hooks to keep us watching, and it is just these kinds of stories that shape the way we make sense of our so-called direct experience. While on any given day most of what we learn is mediated in some way or another, on this day for everyone in the storm very little was. We had to make sense of these random and indeterminate events on our own and that is exhausting. […] we sought the comfort of having someone else tell us how to interpret events. (Doheny-Farina 2001, 83–84)

This was impossible for many people who experienced the Ice Storm as they had no electricity and thus could not watch television or access other media. As a Professor of Media and Communications at Clarkson University in Potsdam, New York, prior to the Ice Storm Doheny-Farina had written a book about the potential dangers of spending too much time connected to global networks. Thus, in *The Grid and the Village*, he closely analyzes the media coverage of the Ice Storm in both Canada and the United States, and is also self-consciously critical of his own attempts to shape the narrative of the Ice Storm in his own storytelling. He admits that his own and others' eyewitness accounts included in his book "are infused with techniques of drama and narrative. Why? Because it is with those techniques that many of us try to make sense of trauma and handle the uncertainties of a difficult time" (Doheny-Farina 2001, x–xi). Doheny-Farina had access to these television reports of the Ice Storm only after the fact. During the crisis he was cut off from any outside contact beyond his neighbors, telephoning relatives, and intermittent local radio reports that were mostly call-in shows during which local citizens reported their own experiences.

Pierre Szalowski lends an air of authenticity to his novel's narrative of the Ice Storm by interspersing the action with dates and supposed excerpts from television news reports about the worsening disaster, juxtaposing the dire impact of the Ice Storm on the city with the rather jovial narrative. Before his home loses electricity, the young boy narrator sees images of the emergency shelters on television:

> Voir ces gens installés sur des lits de camp, faisant la queue pour aller aux douches, fatigués, ça m'a ébranlé. On aurait dit des images qui ne venaient pas du Québec. D'habitude, la misère, c'est loin. Puis j'ai vu ce petit enfant qui pleurait parce que, dans le centre d'hébergement, il avait perdu ses parents. Et j'ai pleuré avec lui. (Szalowski 2007, 184)[148]

Misery and human suffering are usually perceived to be far away from many North Americans, who are so used to a comfortable lifestyle. Characters in both Ice Storm narratives are shocked to see their wealthy country brought to its knees by the power and unpredictability of a disaster. There is, as Raymond Murphy contends, a belief that technology has mastered nature and that such things cannot happen here (Murphy 2009, 6). In "Banana Chaudfroid," Gabrielle turns on the radio and realizes, "The catastrophe is

[148] Translation: "It gave me a shock to see all those people lying on camp beds, or lining up to go to the showers. It was like pictures from somewhere else, anywhere but Quebec. Normally, human misery is far away. Then I saw this little kid who was crying because he's lost his parents at the shelter. And I started crying with him" (Szalowski 2012, 153–54).

happening in this very place, in her city that is safe from everything" (Proulx 1999, 115). She is indignant that a disaster could truly be happening in Montreal until she turns on the television and *sees* images of the ice's destruction, believing in television news as "a naked and irrefutable truth" (115). Montreal is figured as an improbable site for human misery, but the Ice Storm reveals that even Canada is not safe from everything.

War imagery is used in both narratives: the ice has attacked and laid siege to Montreal, the people fleeing to shelters are called refugees. In *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, "the tension went up a notch" as the neighbors realize the water purification plants are down and one comments, "'It's as if there's a war on!'" (Szalowski 2012, 186) Boris likens the sounds of soldiers marching in the street and the creaking and crashing of ice-laden branches to the darkest days of Communist Russia (Szalowski 2012, 187). In "Banana Chaudfroid," Gabrielle at first enjoys the Ice Storm as a few days to stay indoors, drink hot chocolate, and snap photos of the ethereal, ice-covered city.[149] Initially, Montreal is portrayed as more beautiful thanks to the ice, the city "gleams like a razor blade." Gabrielle "no longer recognizes the trees. They were naked and impoverished, now suddenly they are covered in diamonds" (Proulx 1999, 113). Hansson and Norberg remind us that in literature,

> The negative ideas clustering around 'cold' are not present to the same extent for 'ice' and 'snow.' Ice is for instance often viewed in terms of beauty, compared to precious stones like diamonds […] Ice offers a spectacle, dazzling, brilliant and glittering […] In addition, ice and diamonds can be understood as belonging to neighbouring semantic fields, sharing concepts like 'hardness' and 'sharpness.' (Hansson and Norberg 2009, 10)

The normally stark, urban winter landscape is now rendered beautiful by an extraordinarily intense bout of seasonal nordicity but there is a hard edge, the possibility of this sparkling beauty turning towards sharpness. Gabrielle enjoys the "magnificent disorder" and the people she observes are "laughing" as they slide on the ice, "a crystalline music accompanies all these improvised dances, the music of rain solidifying on trees, cement, cars, people's stunned heads" (Proulx 1999, 114). Proulx begins her narrative of the Ice Storm with distinctly positive, celebratory language, but the tone of the story becomes progressively

[149] Proulx's description of the 1998 Ice Storm is very similar to Murphy's non-fiction account. "The slow but prolonged fall of freezing rain left a clear, thick coating of ice on all the branches and twigs of every tree and shrub. This recast them into marvelous crystalline figures. Lowly weeds were transformed by this process of nature into splendid works of art. Ice sculptures were everywhere." Just like Gabrielle in Proulx's short story, "Professional and amateur photographers spent hours in the freezing rain under umbrellas shooting the beautiful creations of a disturbance of nature" (Murphy 2009, 63–64).

darker and more urgent as the disaster worsens and Gabrielle realizes the seriousness of it. The ice "is gradually masking all colour" but "it could still be called beautiful. But from the window it's clear that the beauty is contrived and is on the verge of turning ugly" (115). The century-old maple trees outside Gabrielle's window split in two with the sound of "an explosion, a bomb, the sound of the world ending" (117). Gabrielle is exhilarated by the catastrophe, commenting: "So it's war. So this is how war feels. Terribly alive" (118). Proulx uses increasingly violent verbs to describe the attack of seasonal nordicity on the city: "ramming," "jammed," "raging," "massacred," "twisted and crumpled, brought to their knees" (116). In addition to calling the people in the shelters "refugees" (118), Proulx also writes of "survivors" (120), intensifying the comparison of the Ice Storm to a war zone.

Gabrielle never loses her electricity and constantly follows the development of the Ice Storm on TV. Watching the news feels necessary, as if by watching it Gabrielle is somehow contributing to her community. She "devotes herself to the television" and "takes note of everything. An objective witness is required" (117). Gabrielle's role as a passive observer of the disaster is ended abruptly by the Prime Minister's "brief and dramatic television appearance" urging private citizens to open their homes to those who have lost power. After phoning around, she realizes that she and everyone she knows are the privileged and now, "There remains coming to the aid of everyone she doesn't know" (119). Gabrielle drives sixty kilometers to the "farthest and most populous shelter" (119) and her observations on the way tell us the true color of disaster in the North, a post-apocalyptic landscape, so different from the televised portrayal:

> It is outdoors that the true texture of the disaster can be felt. The disaster is not swarming with powerful images like on television. The disaster is uniformly grey and cold. An icy sleep has descended forever onto the deserted roads, into the abandoned houses. The soldiers and the hydro workers are the only visible survivors. (119)

Proulx thus critiques the misrepresentation of televised disaster coverage which is made to seem exciting and fast-paced compared to the sleepy reality. In the short story, only the devastating, dire, and shocking images produced by the Ice Storm are represented on the news. There is no mention of goodwill between neighbors helping each other out, no heroic or heartwarming tales are depicted on the television news in this story, unlike *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* which is comprised of only kind, helpful, even heroic neighborly acts. Doheny-Farina notes that on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation news show "The National" some stories were told

> that seemed to say that our true natures are revealed in times of crisis. At one point, for example, reporter Mark Kelley described how there had been a tremendous sense of solidarity among people who were trying to help one another. But then he quickly added that the sense of community may have been fraying under the strain. (Doheny-Farina 2001, 82–83)

In Doheny-Farina's analysis of both local and national media coverage of the Ice Storm in Canada and the United States, he questions whether television coverage projects commonly held assumptions about disasters onto specific events.

> If relatively few people actually experience disasters firsthand, perhaps media depictions of disasters foster common myths, most of which illustrate the negative consequences of the disaster events. These myths create expectations that are then repeatedly fulfilled by those who try to make sense of subsequent disasters. Accordingly, while any one disaster may generate a diverse set of stories, those that have the most impact or that become featured are the ones that promote myths of social dissolution. (Doheny-Farina 2001, 166–67)

Doheny-Farina found that during the Ice Storm, national coverage emphasized the standard negatives, such as numbers of people killed, sheltered, and without power, and the estimated costs in dollars of the event, while local coverage also promoted positive themes of social cohesion (Doheny-Farina 2001, 166–67).

Television continues to have a marked presence throughout "Banana Chaudfroid," as will be evident in my continued analysis below. Though television is less prominent in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, where many characters lose their electricity and are thus unable to watch, television news is still mentioned and "excerpts" are cited between chapters to inform the reader about the facts of the developing disaster. In the following subchapter I will continue to explore the representation of the disaster in Proulx's richly layered short story.

5.4 ñRich countries wear tattered underv Heterotopic Spaces in ñBanana Chaudf

In "Banana Chaudfroid" the social inequalities exacerbated by the Ice Storm are brought to light on television, as Gabrielle realizes "Under their elegant garments, rich countries wear tattered underwear" (Proulx 1999, 118). The Ice Storm refugees who must flee their cold

homes are Quebec's poor, primarily the very old or very young, crowded into shelters because they have no financial means to stay in a hotel, buy a generator, or leave the region. As noted above, Gabrielle's neighborhood is not severely affected by the Ice Storm due to its underground cables. Just as other disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, which most tragically impacted poor and Black communities, the Ice Storm in "Banana Chaudfroid" most seriously affects the poor and illegal immigrants.[150]

In Proulx's narrative, the shelters are portrayed as entirely negative spaces: "nauseating," crowded and dangerous, home to thievery, gangs spreading terror, and pedophiles attacking children (118). Gabrielle watches on television as the police and army go from house to house in areas without electricity, checking for people who were previously unwilling to leave their homes. Proulx underlines the lengths to which some city-dwellers will go to avoid depending on each other, to avoid contact with strangers: "people do die from staying in their frozen bed when it is minus twenty outside, people do die from refusing to be close to each other" (118). Some do not leave their homes because they do not understand what is happening, or they fear being exposed to the authorities.

> And that's where the images become the most unbearable, that's where the underwear of the rich country, shown in prime time, is the most shameful. A whole race of secret indigents are presented as a spectacle, solitary individuals whose existence had gone unnoticed, without official status, without winter clothes, without the ability to understand English or French, a race of people who have been waiting for the heat to come back on for days, hugging their dogs close, who cry and struggle as they're led by force into the monster of heated civilization. (Proulx 1999, 118–19)

Proulx takes the reader off guard by associating heat with monstrosity, translating the fear and panic felt by recent immigrants or refugees who do not understand the society in which they live. The "secret indigents" are paraded as a spectacle through warm living rooms across Canada on television screens. Proulx's story emphasizes that being forced from one's home, even in the interest of one's own safety, is a traumatic experience of placelessness. The fear that if they leave their homes they would never be allowed back is very real. Similarly,

[150] Similar to Gabrielle being awakened to the fact of poverty and illegal immigration in her own city, Hurricane Katrina drew attention to injustice in the United States. "But of course the most salient and ongoing story [of Hurricane Katrina] is one of poverty and racism–all those dramatic, pathetic shots, on television and in the papers, showing who the prime victims were, their helplessness, suffering, and abandonment. While this was no surprise to the community organizers, journalists, academics, and others who deal with these issues every day, for all too large segments of America this was seen as a 'wake-up call'" to poverty and racial discrimination in America" (Hartman and Squires 2006, 2).

residents of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina tried to write a counter narrative of "choosing to stay" in their homes, thereby asserting agency and their right to the city despite the dangers (Klopfer 2015, 3).

Both in the narratives and in reality, the emergency shelters set up during the Ice Storm are Foucauldian heterotopias of crisis, as elucidated in chapter 1.3.3. In comparison to utopias, heterotopias are defined by Foucault as "real places […] which are something like counter-sites" in which "all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1986, 3). As such, the shelters created their own societies during the Ice Storm, like a funhouse mirror image of the world outside. Proulx writes, "Each shelter has become a micro-city, with its thievery, its petty crimes, its neon lighting, its stifling atmosphere" (Proulx 1999, 118). Similar to the heterotopic spaces in Ohlin's *Inside* discussed in chapter 4.3.1, the shelters are also distinctive because they supply what people in a winter climate need: heat. The shelters provided a heated place to live, warm water for hygiene, free food, entertainment, and basic medical care—one might, then, expect them to be depicted as safe havens, intensely positive spaces in contrast to the dangerous, cold, icy outdoors.

Indeed, Doheny-Farina describes the emergency shelters near his home in New York State as community-building public squares where Ice Storm refugees could enjoy a meal, swap stories, and where lonely seniors enjoyed companionship. Describing the shelter in Potsdam, New York, Doheny-Farina recounts in detail the experience of Martha Hartle, a part-time paramedic who was unexpectedly thrust into the role of overseeing and leading the organization of the medical wing of a shelter filled with a thousand people. "While the overwhelming feeling was one of concern, Martha began to notice that many of the elderly, especially those who lived alone, seemed to be enjoying themselves in the open public square of their temporary home" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 121). While stopping into the emergency shelter set up on the college campus where he normally worked, Doheny-Farina and his wife discuss whether or not they too are entitled to eat lunch at the buffet provided. "I said I didn't think we should. 'This is for people who really need it. This is for refugees,' I said quietly. 'I'm not a refugee.' Kath said that just because we could stand outside shivering by a Coleman stove and heat up a can of beans didn't mean we didn't need help too" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 137). Thus, just as in Proulx's fictional story "Banana Chaudfroid," Doheny-Farina calls the people who make use of the shelters refugees, and he underlines the reticence of people from rich nations to identify themselves as such. There is a resistance to admitting

one needs help, and accepting that help. After five days without electricity, surviving with the help of generators that needed frequent repairs, Doheny-Farina and his neighbors decide to go to the Clarkson shelter for a warm meal and conversation with others beyond their immediate circle. That evening turned out to be for Doheny-Farina

> the defining moment of the entire [Ice Storm] experience. To me the building that night evolved into a kind of place that has largely disappeared, even in small towns and villages; it became a public commons, a place where people met by chance and talked about whatever was on their minds. On this night, of course, conversations were focused. […] Talk was easy when everyone was bound by the same necessities. For me it was a simple but powerful night. We were all beginning to shape our collective experiences. We were discovering what the disaster meant. And while everyone's experiences differed in the particulars, they were also connected and similar. (Doheny-Farina 2001, 140–42)

In contrast to Doheny-Farina's positive and community-affirming depiction of the emergency shelters, "Banana Chaudfroid," on the other hand, portrays the shelters as "monsters of heated civilization," entirely negative heterotopic spaces that one would wish to escape from, similar to the crowded, over-heated, and dangerous heterotopias in Ohlin's novel (see chapter 4.3.1). Even though the city of Montreal was paralyzed by the Ice Storm and being outdoors or in a cold home could have been life-threatening, the heterotopic shelters are even less desirable in both "Banana Chaudfroid" and the brief mention they receive in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* (see Szalowski 2007, 184, in which the narrator watches on television as people at a shelter line up for the shower and a boy who has been separated from his parents cries). Gabrielle thus travels to a far-off shelter and "rescues" a family who desperately wanted to leave it.

5.4.1 Storm and the City: Montreal as Heterotopia

Beyond the shelters as heterotopic spaces within the city, I posit that the uncanny Ice Storm which lays siege to Montreal renders the entire city space a heterotopia. In his fourth principle, Foucault introduces "heterochronies," heterotopias linked to "slices in time" (Foucault 1986, 6).[151] Daily routines are disrupted, transportation and business halted, and

[151] See also Rosenthal's claim that today, in large, multicultural urban centers the entire city should be seen as a heterotopic space due to the coexistence of multiple sites and cultural groups within urban space (Rosenthal 2011, 52).

normal behavior unsettled in this abnormal period. The Ice Storm provides a heterotopic space for behavior deviating from the norm, an opportunity for change to occur. This has been evidenced above in the transformations which take place in all of the characters in Szalowski's *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*. For many who experienced the Ice Storm, the loss of the electrical grid meant that people had to take up the responsibility for maintaining the "social grid" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 9). They no longer had the virtual and placeless communities based on television, radio, and email communication, but only face-to-face contact with the people geographically closest to them. Those people were not family or even friends, but neighbors. At the beginning of "Banana Chaudfroid," Gabrielle is annoyed that her neighbors do not stay home and enjoy contemplating the Ice Storm. Instead, they use axes and hammers to free their cars, trying to continue with their normal routines. Gabrielle does not develop closer relationships to her neighbors, as happens in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*; she has no contact with them except, a few days into the disaster, borrowing tools from a neighbor to free her car from the ice so she can drive to the distant emergency shelter. Gabrielle has no contact with her neighbors precisely because they do not lose their electricity: They do not need each other. The only other interaction between Gabrielle and a neighbor is mentioned when she goes out to photograph the gorgeous ice-covered maples early in the Ice Storm: "The neighbor from across the hall is watching her through the window, clearly disapproving. Gabrielle takes her picture. Click" (Proulx 1999, 116–17). This underlines the hostility and passive aggressive behavior common between urban neighbors, similar to the characters in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* before the Ice Storm.

Rather than interact with people who live close to her, people she could run into again after the disaster and develop a relationship with, Gabrielle opts to invite a family from "the farthest and most populous shelter" (119) into her home. Gabrielle drives sixty kilometers along dangerous highways, feeling self-righteous and self-sacrificial to make such a dramatic gesture. Her boyfriend Francis is "astonished" that she would open her home to strangers. "The tone of admiration in his voice is like a wind that sweeps away all of Gabrielle's last doubts" (119). Ten-year-old Wayne, his mother Paula, who is heavily pregnant, and her silent boyfriend Roger, a welder "in real life" (121), stay in Gabrielle's living room for the next few days. The emphasis on Roger's "real life" job signifies that the Ice Storm is *not* real life, the days and weeks in which Montrealers were affected by the ice, though indeed very real, are depicted as a parallel reality. Even as the Ice Storm is just beginning and Gabrielle is out photographing the beauty, she notices the disruption of all things familiar.

> She no longer recognizes the five o'clock traffic. […] There are no more traffic lights, at least those that exist swing lifelessly at the end of their cables, struck down by some unknown illness. Where are the police? Where are the trucks spreading sand? Disorder reigns supreme, magnificent disorder. (113−14)

As the disaster progresses and Gabrielle takes in the family of strangers, all of life is now concentrated in her small apartment. Gabrielle enjoys feeling needed by her guests; their presence in her home gives her a sense of purpose and importance: "The centre of the world is no longer out there, it is right here, along with these uncomfortable guests who need to be comforted. She exists only for that purpose" (121). However, the house guests seem to be of a "different species" (123) from Gabrielle and she has trouble bonding with them. The family spends their days and nights holed up in Gabrielle's living room smoking, crying, talking on the phone to friends and relatives who stayed in the "disaster zone" (124), and watching television, which is on constantly. The television is "their common glue" (121), reminding them all that the Ice Storm is the only reason they are together, and it covers over their awkward silences.

The TV's incessant disaster coverage fades to the background during only one significant moment in the story. Gabrielle prepares a simple meal of spaghetti, "familiar cooking so they won't be frightened" (121), insinuating their lower social status and her own sense of superiority. Gabrielle then brings out "a very simple dessert" (121), Bananas Foster (which Cohen translates as Banana Chaudfroid to keep the imagery of the mixing of cold and hot elements).[152] The dessert is composed of ice cream and a banana cut open and stuffed with butter and brown sugar, all drenched in rum and lit on fire (the recipe is included in the prose text). As it is the eponymous scene, the gesture of this dessert cannot be overlooked as a turning point in Proulx's story:

> They eat. They eat in silence, in a silence of extreme contentment rather than embarrassment. The television disappears. The strangeness of the situation disappears. Nothing remains but this taste […] the smooth, the melting, the warm and cold together. […] Paula gives Gabrielle her first real smile. 'Why did you make that?' she asks. 'To help,' Gabrielle replies humbly. The two women keep smiling—and it

[152] Matt Cohen, who translated Proulx's story, comments in a fax conversation in 1998 with Heidi Harms, editor of the collection in which the story was published, "I kept chaudfroid in the title partly because it is the dictionary translation and I had no better substitute, partly because it's the basis of a crucial pun later in the story" (Cohen November 13, 1998).

> continues for several minutes, a gaping breach through everything that separates them. (Proulx 1999, 122)

Here is evidence of the discourse of nordicity, of freeze and thaw, as central to the text. The mixing of the warm and cold components of the dessert symbolizes a melting of the ice, both the literal ice which has besieged the city, and the icy silence between Gabrielle and her guests caused by their socioeconomic difference.[153] Sharing this dessert "forms a kind of contact zone, to borrow Mary Louise Pratt's term" (Mercer and Strom 2007, 39) enabling contact, even friendship, between these diverse people, who normally have nothing in common. This is a brief interlude in which the extraordinary Ice Storm experience seems to melt together with "real life" beyond the disaster, the dessert is able to silence the yammering television in the background and bridges the social gaps between Gabrielle and her guests for a few brief moments.

The warmth between them is short lived, however, when Paula calls her son Wayne a "horse's ass" (123) and kicks him out of the living room. Gabrielle is shocked by Paula's behavior towards her son, which she considers reprehensible. But Wayne is also "a different species" from the privileged children she knows, who are "nice looking and spontaneously attract caresses" (123). This incident freezes the "warm, melting feeling, the unshakable compassion that had gripped her so strongly the last two days" (123). As the disaster intensifies and the devastation increases, so too does Gabrielle's feeling of isolation from her guests. She escapes the confines of her now crowded apartment and walks downtown with her camera, but decides "such devastation cannot be photographed" (125). When she returns home to "the deafening sound of the television," Gabrielle wishes she could send her guests away but instead sits down and watches TV with them in silence "in the warmth of the electricity" (126). Gabrielle begins to feel desperate, and is "inconsolable" as she talks to her boyfriend, Francis, who lives in Paris, that night on the phone. He encourages her to "'get on a plane and come here right now'" (126) but Gabrielle is trapped in the ice-covered city. Not only are the airports closed, but Montreal is captured by its own geography. "The city is an

[153] The differences between Gabrielle and the working-class family are alluded to: She has already mentioned that it is the poor who go to shelters, and the constant television watching and smoking are also markers of difference between Gabrielle and her guests. When Paula angrily discovers her son Wayne lied about being groped at the shelter, she is furious that they have ended up at Gabrielle's place. In the original French version, she uses a slang Québécois term for "here," "*icitte*" which confirms they are francophone Québécois possibly from the countryside (Proulx 1998, 9). Later, Wayne calls the dessert "*chauds-frette* de bananes," again a colloquial Québécois term, "frette" for "froid" (Proulx 1998, 14). Gabrielle also refers to Paula's highly nasal accent and the country songs Roger sings to comfort her, underlining their social class difference (Proulx 1999, 123-25).

island. The bridges that link it to the world have just closed because ice falling from the structure is a threat to cars and trucks. The city is a prison" (123−24). This underlines the abnormality of the Ice Storm and the transformation of the entire island of Montreal into a heterotopic space. Proulx likens the claustrophobic discomfort of Gabrielle's shared home with the entire city's isolation from the rest of the world, and contrasts this trapped feeling with the freedom and pleasure Gabrielle later experiences when skating outdoors with Wayne.

Gabrielle expects to be thanked by her guests and her aim is to connect to them emotionally, but the differences between them are too great. "She had imagined that disasters must break down all barriers and that they would end up united, united the way humans ought to be to confront the end of the world. She has never felt so alone as she does with them" (125). Finally, after several days Gabrielle and ten-year-old Wayne go ice skating on the ice-covered streets and park paths. In the few hours they spend outside, Gabrielle finds joy and feels connected to both the city and to the boy. The outdoors, potentially cold and dangerous in the midst of the Ice Storm, is depicted by Proulx as a positive, freeing space in comparison with the smothering desperation inside Gabrielle's apartment. The city gleams beautifully as the ice masks the dirt and ugliness; Montreal covered in ice is the epitome of a heterotopic space: "The iced-over paths of the park, the gleaming and unusable sidewalks, the wide, sweeping, closed boulevards, it is all theirs, the whole city is their city. […] Ice exists so they can fly like the wind where before they walked heavily through ordinary life" (127). Again the narrative emphasizes that normal life has disappeared. Ordinary life is heavy and weighs them down, whereas this intensified state of seasonal nordicity is invigorating and freeing, and "the whole city" becomes "their city." The Ice Storm enables Gabrielle and Wayne to claim their own sense of place in the city space, just as it allowed Boris to do in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*.

Gabrielle is "in love—without knowing whether it's with the magic to be found in the midst of despair" (128) or with Wayne, or with childhood, and her own desire to have a child is awakened. But this glimpse at closeness with the boy dissolves "like a mist" (128), because the next day the family leaves to stay with a relative whose electricity has just come back on. Gabrielle is saddened that just as she is about to connect to the family emotionally, they leave. In the French published versions of the story there are two supplementary pages which do not appear in Proulx's original story from which Cohen translated (see Proulx 2005, 235–36 and Proulx 2015, 283–86). In these two pages, Wayne expresses several times that he would rather remain with Gabrielle then go to stay with Paula's brother. Gabrielle's love for the boy

is described as an intoxicating drug even better than what she has experienced with her boyfriend Francis. Wayne's hand in hers "chamboule l'ordre glacé des choses", that is, turns the frozen order of things upside down. "La chaleur inonde immédiatement toutes ses parties froides, abolissant jusqu'à l'idée du froid. Le gris morose de la ville redevient lumineux"[154] (Proulx 2015, 283). At the prospect of returning to her own neighborhood and relatives, Paula is transformed into a happy, chatty, beautiful woman who cooks dinner on their final night with Gabrielle. She emphasizes that they have been very comfortable with Gabrielle, obviously more so than with her brother, but "c'est la même souche, le même territoire primordial" (2015, 284) meaning her brother is of their kind, and with him they would be on their home turf. This again underlines the social class difference between Gabrielle and the family. The change in title in the 2005 French version of the story, "La vraie nature de l'eau," puts an emphasis on the melting of the ice and of Gabrielle's "cold inner parts" by the child Wayne, and causes one to focus on her desire to have a baby expressed at the end of the story (in all versions). In the French version's extra pages, Gabrielle also realizes she was blind to seeing "la vraie nature" of Paula and Roger. She had focused on their annoying traits, but on their final evening together she realizes their deep and tender love for each other.

Before they go, Paula "holds Gabrielle against her, against her living belly, and this unexpected embrace shocks Gabrielle and she feels she has been abandoned at the entrance to a fabulous country that she hasn't had time to visit" (Proulx 1999, 128). She prints a picture of Wayne from their ice skating adventure, "a happy little king in his kingdom of ice. His temporary kingdom, because the ice is starting to melt again" (128). Gabrielle's fleeting happiness and the emphasis on temporality remind us that the entire Ice Storm is itself a heterotopic space in time, a distortion of reality not meant to last. It was a period of extraordinary circumstances in which the city of Montreal was transformed into an "Other space," to speak with Foucault.

The repetition of the word "again" five times in the final lines of the story emphasizes the return to normal life. Gabrielle suggests the idea of having a baby to Francis on the phone, to which he responds with silence: "From the other side of the Atlantic there is a silence, an opening into which might come something very cold, something like black ice" (129) and thus she quickly puts off her suggestion. The Ice Storm disrupted Gabrielle's everyday existence and stirs in her a desire for new life, again subverting the common association of

[154] Translation: "Warmth immediately floods all of her cold parts, abolishing even the idea of cold. The morose grey of the city becomes luminous again."

cold and ice with death. Yet the cold, black ice that threatens to come between her and Francis after she suggest having a baby reiterates the association of cold and ice with denial of life (see Hansson and Norberg 2009, 7). The winter season, bringing the literal death of much in the natural world, has often been used as a metaphor for transition in Québécois literature (Suhonen 2009, 141). The Ice Storm is a period of transition for Gabrielle in which she realizes her social class privilege and tries to reach out to a family that is different from her. She desires to have a child, but the "black ice" in Francis's silence encroaches and signals the decisive end of the heterotopic slice in time which allowed for the possibility of change in Gabrielle.

5.5 Concluding Disaster

In conclusion, I have shown that both *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* and "Banana Chaudfroid" aim to mediate how Montrealers remember the Ice Storm of 1998. In "Banana Chaudfroid," Monique Proulx portrays the Ice Storm as an ambivalent event, at the same time exciting, destructive, deadly, isolating, and beautiful. The ice-covered city is a "glass cathedral" (Proulx 1999, 114) and the break with normal life exhilarating. Taking in strangers gives Gabrielle a self-righteous sense of purpose. Yet she is unable to forge lasting bonds with the family she tries to adopt, who quickly disappear from her life again. The television is on constantly during "Banana Chaudfroid" and televised news coverage interprets the disaster as more shocking and colorful than the frozen, slow, grey reality. Television exposes the "tattered underwear" of discrimination, poverty, and illegal migrants hidden beneath the exterior clothing of this rich country that prides itself on its tolerant, multicultural policies. Gabrielle is forced to realize her own privileged status as she notices the disproportionate, negative impacts of the Ice Storm on children, the poor, the elderly, and immigrants as if for the first time as they are brought uncomfortably to light on television screens in the cozy living rooms of those unaffected by the disaster. In "Banana Chaudfroid," the Ice Storm exacerbates urban loneliness and socio-economic divides are not overcome.

Pierre Szalowski's novel, *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, on the other hand, records with nostalgia a disaster that brought the people of Quebec together. A neighborhood is united by need, ordinary people step in to help each other, and their best selves are revealed. The life-threatening disaster is remembered in cheerful terms as a great adventure that created solidarity among people of all walks of life. Although hidden under the guise of a heartwarming narrative, the novel still takes issue, in an exaggerated manner, with

the objectification of women in the sex industry, prejudices against Jews, gays, and immigrants in Quebec, and the devastation of divorce in the life of a child. Despite the documentary authenticity Szalowski lends to his novel through television reports, the text never mentions the 35 people who lost their lives as a result of the Ice Storm of 1998, the billions of dollars of damage, nor the loss of livelihood for dairy farmers.[155] Szalowski's portrayal of an urban community pulling together, where social bonds became stronger due to the adversity of a disaster is consistent with Doheny-Farina's non-fiction account in *The Grid and the Village*, which demonstrates that "urban neighborhoods and rural villages of the Ice Storm were becoming the 'therapeutic communities' of natural disasters" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 166–67).

In both Proulx and Szalowski's Ice Storm narratives, public spaces, communal activities, and narration are significant components of the disaster experience and road to healing from collective trauma. "Collective trauma refers to the impact of adversity on relationships in families, communities and societies at large. This includes natural and human-caused disasters as well as the cumulative effects of poverty, oppression, illness, and displacement" (Saul 2014, 3). Just as the characters of *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* are changed by the Ice Storm, many people found it difficult to go back to ordinary life after the excitement and trauma caused by the Ice Storm. Doheny-Farina reports that Martha, the paramedic he interviewed who ran the medical wing of a shelter during the Ice Storm, felt depressed and could not concentrate when she returned to her normal life and job. "She wanted to be with people who had gone through the same thing," feeling that no one else could understand. "'I feel like I've experienced posttraumatic stress syndrome'" (Doheny-Farina 2001, 149). This is reminiscent of Tug's trauma endured due to the Rwandan Genocide in *Inside* (see chapter 4.2.2). Saul confirms that "The mental health consequences of disaster are many and include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), physical health problems, chronic problems in living, interpersonal relationships, and financial stress, as well as the loss of resources such as actual and perceived social support" (Saul 2014, 1).

Private homes were turned into public spaces, allowing urbanites to interact and (at least try to) bridge the socioeconomic divides between them. The Ice Storm was a heterotopic slice of time, halting normal life, routines, and infrastructures, thus forcing Montreal's citizens to change their social practices by engaging in communal activities and opening their homes to one another. Greater understanding is fostered between the characters in both

[155] Note that Proulx's story does list damages and deaths in numbers, see Proulx 1999, 124 or Proulx 2015, 278.

fictional texts as new relationships with strangers are forged. The ice and cold, so often figured as negative forces in literature, exert positive change in the characters, helping them to overcome their prejudices. The emergency shelters are portrayed as negative, even dangerous heterotopias in both fictional accounts. Indoor spaces are stifling in comparison with the cold, icy, refreshing outdoor spaces. The Ice Storm allows both Gabrielle and Boris to appropriate their own place in the heterotopic city space. Television provides narration within the texts, interpreting the Ice Storm for the characters who are living through it, while the novel and short story themselves are contributions to a growing body of Ice Storm literature that help to shape the collective memory of the event. The two Ice Storm texts analyzed here emphasize the utter nordicity of Montreal and how the disaster changed social practices of city dwellers, demonstrating the interrelation between climate and cultural representations.

6 Bearing Witness in Montreal: Trauma, Memory, and Cold in Madeleine Thien ô *Dogs at the Perimeter*

Madeleine Thien's 2011 novel *Dogs at the Perimeter* is a lyrical, poignant, and heartbreaking tale of memory and trauma, juxtaposing northern motifs in Montreal with the lush foliage and violence of 1970s Cambodia. The past haunts Janie, a Cambodian refugee who came to Canada as an unaccompanied minor at the age of twelve after having survived the brutal Cambodian genocide under the regime of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge (1975−1979). Her mother, father, and younger brother Sopham all perished along the way, and Janie suffers, twenty years later, with survivor's guilt. She regrets not having been able to save her brother from drowning during a shipwreck they encountered as they fled, after he had rescued her from the Khmer Rouge work camp where she would have surely died. Now an electrophysiologist at the Brain Research Centre in Montreal (a fictionalization of the Montreal Neurological Institute at McGill University, confirmed in an interview with Thien, see Colbert 2012; no pagination), Janie has recently been overcome by rage and has started to act out violently. She has both neglected to care for her son, Kiri, and hit him. Despite the forgiveness and loving support of her husband, Navin, who also survived a tumultuous childhood in Malaysia, Janie has chosen to move out for a time in order to protect her son from her own unpredictable violence. She sleeps at her friend and mentor Hiroji's empty apartment, also a neuroscientist at the BRC, who vanished one night after work three months earlier. Janie suspects that Hiroji has gone to Cambodia to search for his brother, James, who disappeared there in 1975, when he was working as a Red Cross doctor in the refugee camps. The link they share to Cambodia has forged a strong friendship between Janie and Hiroji over the years, as well as the weight of memory and the need to bear witness to the lives of lost family members.

Thien's narrative slips back and forth between memories, times, places, and characters, the form of the novel mirroring the trauma and confusion experienced by the characters. Janie's life is no longer a coherent, linear storyline, as Thien's narrative reflects, and thus conforms to Cathy Caruth's "conceptualisation of trauma for narrative fiction," which "suggests that if trauma is at all susceptible to narrative formulation, then it requires a literary form which departs from conventional linear sequence" (Whitehead 2004, 6). Janie struggles with the identities she has left behind, that of being a child in a happy family in Phnom Penh before the war (we are not told her birth name and thus I will refer to her by her Canadian name, Janie, throughout), the traumatic abuse and attempted brainwashing she suffered as a child slave of the Khmer Rouge army when she was renamed Mei, and later as an orphaned refugee adopted by a Vancouver woman, Lena. It was in Vancouver that she took

on the new name, Janie, but even after making a career for herself as an adult in Montreal and starting a new family, she still struggles with the burden of memory of her past. In order to engage in a close reading of this complex novel, I will briefly recapitulate its chief storylines.

The epigraph at the beginning of Thien's novel is one line from Haing S. Ngor in the 1984 film *Survival in the Killing Fields*: "Tell the gods what is happening to me." This foretells the chief aim of the novel: to document and bear witness to what happened to Janie and her family in the killing fields of Khmer Rouge occupied Cambodia, as well as the experiences of several other characters during the genocide (James, Sorya, Nuong). The novel is divided into seven sections titled with the name of the character that makes up the primary focus of the action in that section. Before the first major section begins, pages one and two are a fragment written by Janie explaining when and where Dr. Hiroji Matsui was last seen (November 29, 2005), and the police's assumption that, as there was no indication of foul play, Hiroji probably wanted to disappear and not be found. What follows is the first section entitled "Janie" (Thien 2011, 3–40), set in Montreal in February 2006. Janie longs to see her son, missing him as she only sees him once a day in the school playground as has been agreed upon with Navin. "It is an interim measure, we have both said. A way forward" (28). Janie is also searching for a way back to her son, to relinquish the demons that torture her mind, causing her to act out violently and lose control of herself.

The second section "Hiroji" (41−57) details the year prior to Hiroji's disappearance and the catalyst for his and Janie's sudden return to their pasts. Hiroji runs into a former patient, a Japanese man who had been beaten and completely lost his memory and thus, his identity. Hiroji tells Janie about it in March of 2005, the preceding year. The man reminds Hiroji of his brother, James, reigniting his desire to search for his brother, which he had done extensively in the 1970s. Hiroji gives Janie the file of old letters and requests for information he had often sent to Cambodia in the past. As she can speak Khmer, Janie tries to help track James down, but gives up in August. In November 2005, Janie gives Hiroji the file back at dinner, encouraging her friend to abandon the search for what happened to his long-lost brother. Yet the letters have also triggered Janie's own memories: "James's letters had opened something in me, and I began sliding into a numb melancholy. The world seemed bled of colour, yet I had vivid, exhausting dreams" (53). She tries to convince Hiroji that "we have to let them go" (56), meaning their dead family members, but Hiroji refuses.

The third section "Mei" (59−98) is the brutal account of the Cambodian genocide, beginning with Janie's family's expulsion from Phnom Penh when the city fell to the Khmer

Rouge rebels in 1975. Janie is 10 and her brother, Sopham, only 8 when they leave their childhood behind. Mei is the name given to her by Prasith, the boy-leader of their work-group who both torments them and later saves their lives. The Khmer Rouge exalted uneducated peasants as the true, pure Khmer people and disdained education, as well as Western or urban influence. The brainwashing of the urbanites and slow erasure of their pasts begins by forcing them out of the city into the countryside, abandoning all of their possessions, separating families, endless wandering, starvation, and grueling, senseless work driven on by teenaged, illiterate boys with guns. Their father is taken away from the family early on; later the children are separated from their mother and each other. Sopham and Mei pretend to surrender to the teachings of the Khmer Rouge, numbing their emotions and guarding their actions and speech so as not to stand out.

The following section, "Rithy" (99−140), focuses on Janie's brother, Sopham. The boy takes on the name Rithy, meaning strength, in order to survive the Khmer Rouge. He lies about his background, pretending he has no education. Sopham is able to "cleave his soul," and thus lives and survives in another identity for a time (106). "He waited and kept his hands and his face impeccably clean but inside, there was someone else, a boy who watched, who had no need for language, who saw everything but never spoke, a boy who waited in the dirt for the end of one season and the start of another" (113). Her brother is now nine years old, but has already murdered and tortured, working as part of Angkar, the all-seeing, pervasive, paranoid regime ruling Cambodia. A dying and delirious woman he is interrogating covertly gives him a ring with tiny paper scrolls hidden inside. The scrolls reveal a map to the caves leading to the Vietnamese border as well as a secret password; he memorizes and destroys them. The boy knows that Angkar would seek to kill the rest of his family once he disappeared. "Who was left? Only his sister. Only me" (113). Meanwhile, Janie has been working with other girls in a quarry where she makes a best friend, Bopha, who helps her visit her mother in the night at a makeshift "clinic" run by children, where she is about to die. Too soon, Bopha also dies. Janie is close to death by starvation and exhaustion herself when her brother comes to rescue her. They escape through the jungle to the caves, slipping out of Cambodia into Vietnam with a few other refugees including a man named Meng, who pays their passage to human traffickers as well as his own. They are smuggled onto a cramped boat and during the horrifying sea crossing the boat is attacked by pirates. The girls and women are raped. During the attack, Thien's prose is haunting, spare, and effective, thereby "narrat[ing] the unnarratable" (Whitehead 2004, 4).

Janie survives the shipwreck, her wrist tied by her brother Sopham to a piece of floating wood, but Sopham drowns. Janie and Meng are both plucked from the sea by fishermen and given another chance at life as refugees in the West. Before Janie flies to Canada to be adopted, Meng performs a ceremony with her, trying to help her dead family let go of her and allow her the freedom to walk into a new life. "I remember celebrations, ceremonies, the words Meng had spoken before I flew away to Canada. Your daughter is crossing the ocean. You, too, must go on. You, too, must walk to your own destiny" (Thien 2011, 165). Yet Janie still sees the knotted rope binding her wrist to the wood, symbolizing how she feels forever bound to her dead brother and parents. "The knot my brother had tied would not come loose. Inside me, all the feeling went away" (138).

Abruptly, the narrative returns to present day winter in Montreal. The reader realizes Janie has been wandering the city during the preceding hundred pages (the two sections "Mei" and "Rithy"), a frame beginning with "I begin walking, unsure where to go" (61) when the smell of coffee from a Montreal café triggers her memories. Now she has come to the northern edge of the island of Montreal: "I am nearly at the edge of the city. The road gives way to open space, untrodden snow. The northern reach of Boulevard St-Laurent comes to an end and I stand at last at the river. […] I have walked as far as I can away from the city, I cannot find a way to go any farther" (138).[156] This indicates, then, that during the last two sections of the novel Janie has been walking the city in the snow, wandering away from her current life in order to reconnect with the memories of her childhood in Cambodia, to reconnect with her family. "Something has turned over in me, broken and come undone" (139). While standing by the river, she calls her old friend Meng, who now lives happily in Paris, surrounded by grandchildren, on her cell phone.

> 'Meng,' I say finally. 'On the boat that night, did you hear them coming?'
>
> In all these years we've stayed in touch, I've never been able to talk about what happened. […]
>
> I want to tell Meng that I know too much, I have too many selves and they no longer fit together. I need to know how it is possible to be strong enough. How can a person ever learn to be brave? (139−40)

[156] Thien seems to be describing the small Nicolas-Viel park in the Montreal borough of Ahuntsic.

Meng reassures her that her parents and brother "wouldn't want you to fight on and on. To fight even when it's done" (Thien 2011, 138–40). Janie looks down at the St. Lawrence River and notices, "that this river, finally, is blind to me. I can see it now for what it is, only a membrane, a way down. *Leave me*, I think. *Let me go*" (140; emphases in original).

The following section, "Kiri" (141−71), continues immediately with Janie getting on the Montreal metro and heading back south through the city. Analepses flesh out the details of when Janie first met Hiroji and what happened that January of 2006, when she hits her son Kiri on two occasions. Janie finds a phone number, calls it, and figures out where Hiroji has gone. He has finally found his brother James, alive, living in a village in Laos. Janie flies to Laos to join them, letting memories of the past come, no longer suppressing them. She is still unable to revisit Cambodia now, thirty years later. Laos, just across the border, is as close as she can bear to get. During her journey, she talks to her husband and son on the phone, and she and Navin open up to each other more about their pasts. In a jungle village in Laos, Janie sits and talks with James, who had been a Red Cross doctor in Phnom Penh when it fell to the Khmer Rouge. He had also endured the Cambodian genocide as a prisoner, his wife and baby son presumably killed. Talking with James lets loose a dam of emotion and memory in Janie that she allows to run through her in order to finally assert agency over her own life:

> Afterwards, and in the days that followed, I wrote so many things. I did not know what I was making. Terrible dreams came, but I tried to let them run through me and reach the ground. I saw that they would always return, this was the shape of my life, this was where the contours lay, this was the form. Yet I wanted, finally, to be the one to describe it. To decide on the dreams that took root in me. (171)

During the preceding months in Montreal, Janie had been waiting, helplessly, for Hiroji to return. "He will tell me how to accept this life. I dream of returning home, not only to the place of my birth but to my son. My mother who died without me, who died so long ago, will finally close her eyes" (27). Janie had been waiting for Hiroji to save her, to return to Montreal in order to help her reconcile her past and present, to bring peace to both her mother and herself. Now, by making the journey to Laos and allowing herself to fully feel and relive her memories, Janie is taking charge of her own past and future, allowing herself to face her past so she can return to her son, Kiri. When she has made peace with her past and the survivor's guilt she has struggled with, she heads home to Canada. On the phone, she

promises her son that she will not disappear. Hiroji tells her that "when everything is finished here" (253) he, too, will return to Montreal.[157]

The portions of Thien's novel set in Montreal are entrenched in the discourse of seasonal nordicity, and the juxtaposition of Cambodia's heat with Canada's cold make for a stark contrast. I will first examine the motifs of cold, ice, and snow in Janie's present-day life in Montreal. Then, I demonstrate how windows are used to provide a barrier of protection between characters and the elements, or between each other. Next, I discuss the burden of memory that Janie carries through her life due to her traumatic childhood and how Montreal's nordicity plays a role in memory preservation. This novel could be further analyzed from the perspective of memory and trauma theory; however the scope of this study delimits a specific focus on the elements of nordicity that permeate the narrative.

6.1 Cold and Colorless Montreal: Winter in the City

Thien represents Montreal only as a winter city, with all scenes set in there taking place in the colder months, similar to Ohlin's *Inside*. Hiroji disappears at the beginning of winter, Janie spirals out of control in January, and the present time of narration is mid-February, the coldest depth of winter in the city. This presents a stark contrast to the warm, rainy, and lush scenes of Cambodia. When asked in an interview why she chose Montreal as the partial setting for her novel, Thien replied, "It leant [*sic*] itself well I think because of the solitude of winter, the harshness of winter and in a way it was about as far away as she could be from the landscape of her childhood because Cambodia, it's incredibly lush. Things grow. Sensually, it's really an extraordinary place" (Colbert 2012; no pagination). Thien goes on to describe how the lushness of Cambodia "engages all the parts of your mind and your eyes and your ears and your smell. Whereas winter […] draws you inward […] You can't even smell anything but the cold, and everything is waiting for a very long time for light and warmth again" (Colbert 2012; no pagination).[158]

[157] The remainder of the novel, which I will not go into in detail here, includes the section entitled "James" (173−215) that details his time in Cambodia, and his marriage to Sorya. "Hiroji" (217−53) is the final section of the novel, featuring Hiroji's memories of searching for James after his disappearance in 1975 in the border towns around Cambodia, how he helped a young orphan named Nuong, as well as his return to Cambodia in the present day and finding James in Laos.

[158] Thien goes on to explain: "I think that's it: it just leant itself [*sic*] very much to her psychology. […] In winter I've found you live in your mind in a different way because you need to feed yourself, you know? You need to feed yourself and your mind. I've been in Montreal five years and I still can't wrap my head around winter. I really struggle with it and at the same time I see what kinds of doors it opens internally because you really can't open the external door!" (Colbert 2012; no pagination)

The role of cold in the Montreal component of Thien's novel arrests the reader from the opening paragraph in which Hiroji's mysterious disappearance is recounted by Janie in a fragmented style reminiscent of a police report. "On November 29, 2005, my friend Dr. Hiroji Matsui walked out of Montreal's Brain Research Centre at 7:29 in the evening. On the security video, his expression gives nothing away" (Thien 2011, 1). He is, however, not dressed appropriately for the weather. "He wears no coat, despite the freezing temperatures, and he carries nothing, not even the briefcase with which he had arrived that morning" (1). This lack of preparedness for the bitter weather is foreboding, indicating something is amiss. Perhaps his lack of concern for his own well-being, being underdressed for freezing temperatures, is indicative of Hiroji's distracted state of mind, or his desire to travel lightly in the direction of a warmer climate. Like Tug in Ohlin's *Inside*, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder following the Rwandan genocide, Hiroshi has also been impacted by the traumatic disappearance of his brother during the Cambodian genocide. In Ohlin's novel, Tug and Mathieu, the boy with Asperger's syndrome, were often underdressed for the cold and seemed indifferent to it (see chapter 4.2.1). Similarly, Janie's own disturbed mental state is demonstrated by forgetting to remove her coat while indoors and leaving windows open for long periods despite the winter's cold. The wind, personified, attacks her and chases her inside: "The wind swoops down, blowing free what little heat I have. I can barely lock the door and get upstairs fast enough. Inside, I pull off my boots but keep my coat and scarf on against the chill" (Thien 2011, 7). Additionally, Kiri worries about his mother getting cold when she visits him at his schoolyard. She is not wearing any mittens and her hands are icy. "My son frees his hands and begins buttoning my coat up, all the way to the top. 'Don't get cold, Momma,' he says. I promise that I won't" (30).[159]

Despite the frigid cold, Janie needs to go "Out, out, out," (25) to walk the city in order to process her thoughts and find room to breathe, again reminiscent of Tug in *Inside*. It is the middle of the night and she has drunk a bottle of wine. Her brother Sopham's memory is so close that she thinks she is walking with him. She heads "[d]own treacherous stairs," indicating the outdoor spiral staircases that are a hallmark of Montreal, "sliding along the invisible sidewalk" (25) coated with snow and ice. She walks quiet residential streets and is "drawn to the windows, to rooms lit by the inconstant blue of their televisions" (25).[160] Janie

[159] Her son warming her is reminiscent of Sopham, her younger brother taking care of her. When he rescued her from the Khmer Rouge quarry, Sopham brings fresh clothing and food for her, washing her in a river after they are safely away from the cooperative where she had been enslaved. In response to his question if she is all right, she responds "that I was cold, only cold" (Thien 2011, 127).

[160] For further analysis of the symbolism of windows in Dogs at the Perimeter, see below in subchapter 6.2.

warms up as she walks, and she distractedly pulls off her hat and leaves it on a fence. "Tomorrow I will not remember where my hat is, tomorrow I will feel confusion" (25−26). She imagines that Sopham finds the cold difficult and Janie protectively searches for his shoes "until my hands are numb with cold" (25). Janie takes refuge in St. Kevin's church, an English-speaking Catholic parish located in the borough of Côte-des-Neiges that is kept open and warm "on the bitterest winter nights" (26). There a kind, elderly woman listens while Janie tells her about trying to save her brother from drowning.

Cold is not the only marker of nordicity in the novel, snow and slush are also strong symbols in Thien's narrative. Scattered throughout Janie's narrative are dated fragments, scraps of memory she has written down, things Hiroji has told her about James and about patients he has treated. She writes down these memories to try to make sense of his disappearance, to find clues as to where he has gone. The words come upon her suddenly, like a snowstorm: "The buildings across the street fall dark, yet the words keep coming, accumulating like snow, like dust, a fragile cover that blows away so easily" (Thien 2011, 10). Janie implies that snow is not truly able to mask or cover anything for long, it is deceptive, and the truth will be revealed. In literature, snow often blankets the city as a reference to lost purity (Chartier 2007b, 45; see also chapter 4.2.1). Indeed, in the scene above, before Janie goes out and finds refuge in the church, she looks out the window on the snow-covered city: "Nearly four in the morning and the view outside is fairy-tale white, a sharpened landscape that seems to rebuke the darkness, *Go back, go back, return from whence you came!*" (Thien 2011, 17; emphasis in original) Here the snow represents purity and goodness as it attempts to push back the darkness, the white brightness fighting against Janie's dark memories as they encroach upon her mind. Yet the snow's promise is illusory. For a brief time the snow is soft, white, and beautiful but soon it is dirtied by people and cars, melts into grey slush, or blows away.

Thien captures different facets of snow in the city as Janie crosses Montreal on the bus, metro, and on foot: the pristine whiteness of a fresh blanket of snow, as well as the dirty muck of road salt, grime, and melting slush. Winter in Montreal is depicted with a realism of penetrating accuracy as Janie takes the 535 bus from where she lives in the Côte-des-Neiges borough, on the western flank of Mount Royal, towards her workplace downtown at the Brain Research Centre:

> Rivulets of melted slush glide back and forth along the floor. In our heavy boots, we step daintily through the muck. We arrive at my stop and I exit through the back doors.

> Above me, in the clearing sky, pigeons roost on the high wires, clouds descend, and I turn and walk east along the frozen skirts of Mount Royal. The mountain, dipped in snow, has an eerie beauty, tree after tree rising up the hill, slender as matchsticks. The temperature is dropping fast and people, blank-faced beneath their hats and scarves, shoulder roughly by. This place wears its misery so profoundly. Mean-eyed women, sheathed in stiletto boots, kick the ice aside while small men in massive coats lumber down the sidewalk. The elderly fall into snowbanks. All human patience curdles in the winter. (Thien 2011, 30–31)

This is an unromanticized view of winter in the city, both the mountain's "eerie beauty" and the "misery" of preoccupied, "mean-eyed" people. Moreover, Thien's characters are simply trying to survive the winter, preoccupied by family distress. They do not have the margin, be it financial, emotional, or temporal, to engage in winter sports or visit heterotopic entertainment centers like the Biodôme or shopping malls to escape the winter's cold, as Ohlin's characters do in *Inside*.[161] Winter is something to be endured for Thien's Montreal residents.

Furthermore, Thien perpetuates the correlation in Canadian literature of winter with bad things happening (Atwood 1995, 19; see also chapter 2.3.2). Ominously, Thien writes: "The first time it happened, it was January" (Thien 2011, 36). It was the dead of winter and very cold when Janie first neglects her son, Kiri. She has become so "anxious and overworked" since Hiroshi's disappearance that she forgot to pick Kiri up from daycare.[162] "By the time the aggravated staff reached me, my son had been waiting in the deserted rooms for more than two hours" (36). Janie guiltily runs the whole way to pick him up, apologizes, and walks home with Kiri in the snow, "stumbling together on the patches of ice." It is as if the city's nordicity has caused her to stumble, it is personified and against her: "the cold

[161] See chapter 4.3.1 for a discussion of heterotopias in Alix Ohlin's *Inside*. There is only one reference to heterotopic spaces in Thien's novel: On page 147, Hiroji tells Janie about Italian philosopher Camillo's seventeenth century Memory Theater which Janie likens to her friend Bopha's imaginary book that she had in the Khmer Rouge quarry. "Standing in this room, one could be simultaneously in the present and within the timelines of the past. Bopha's imaginary book came back to me, but now her book was something that I could enter. The pages would remain, like a library, like a city, holding the things I needed to keep but that I could not live with. If such a library, a memory theatre, existed, I could be both who I was and who I had come to be. I could be a mother and a daughter, a separated child, an adult with dreams of my own. These ideas, these metaphors and possibilities, were the gifts Hiroji gave me" (Thien 2011, 147). This description of a memory theater fits perfectly with Foucault's theory of heterotopias, a place which contains a mirror image of real life. For Janie it would be a holding place for the memories she could not live with, but feels she must carry and bear witness to.

[162] Note that in Montreal, primary schools provide after-school supervision for children whose parents work later than normal school hours, which ends around 3:30 pm. The term "daycare" in Montreal is also used for this and not only for institutions caring for younger children of preschool age.

ambushed us. My son had lost his scarf." When she is unable to explain to him where she had been, Kiri cries. Janie is disassociated from him and her own body. It takes all her energy and concentration to cook dinner; she cannot talk to Kiri for fear that her words "would be slurred and broken" (37).[163] She locks herself in her bedroom while her son weeps outside her door. The horrible trauma Janie endured as a child enables the reader to empathize with her, her uncontrollable pain and anger, as well as with her frightened son who is victim to her rage. Her distracted memory flits from her son and trying to remember to turn off the stove to horrific memories of being given blood-soaked clothing to wear as a ten-year-old in Cambodia. "It was January, and the ice covered everything and I didn't know anymore, I couldn't explain, how this could have happened, why I could not control my hands, my own body" (153). The ice here is symbolic of the lack of control Janie feels, the slipping, the layer of something hard covering over human warmth, similar to Gabrielle's experience of ice hardening relationships with her neighbors and guests in Monique Proulx's short story "Banana Chaudfroid," discussed in chapter 5.4.

Janie's husband, Navin, is faultlessly forgiving and gracious: "Navin came home to this wreckage and still he forgave me" (Thien 2011, 36–38). He takes care of their son and always tender with Janie, encouraging her healing, and waiting for her to reconcile with them. Navin is associated with warmth: "When I first arrived in Montreal, this city had seemed so alien to me, so self-contained and mysterious. How many winters have I passed here? Nearly a decade's worth, the cold months accumulating, white and silent, the years opening toward another existence. I remember the warmth of Navin's apartment when I first met him" (163). The first time Janie hits Kiri, they keep it a secret from her husband: "When Navin came home and saw the discoloured skin on his son's face, Kiri said he had fallen at school. I let the lie stand. It had happened once. In a moment that seemed so large and inescapable, anger had suffocated me and then, just as quickly, dissolved" (151).

Navin unwittingly leaves her home alone with their son when he travels to London a few weeks later. Janie tries to avoid being alone with Kiri, but he is confused, following her from room to room. "I went out of the house and stood in the cold, desperate to find the way through. I told myself that I could fix things, I must stop what was happening. In the apartment I turned the heat up high, but still my hands shook" (Thien 2011, 151–52). Janie is

[163] There is no indication that Janie is drunk at this time, as it appears she goes directly from work to pick him up. "The first time it happened, it was January. I had been anxious and overworked, and then, that day, I couldn't find my wallet, and then my keys. In the confusion, I forgot to pick Kiri up from daycare" (Thien 2011, 36).

unable to get warm as she is overcome by memory; Kiri's loud shouting and some water spilled on the floor seem to combine with memory of the shipwreck and trigger an attack:

> The water came to me, everywhere, loud. Something had spilled on the kitchen floor and Kiri was walking through it, running, stamping his feet. I asked him to stop. My thoughts didn't fit together. I heard noises all around us, I saw shapes coming nearer and Kiri shouting, oblivious. *Stop*, I said again. I tried to leave but he gripped my hands. I pulled away, but he was holding my clothes. I tried to free myself. In a moment of wildness, he grabbed a handful of forks and threw them down into the mess. The noise seemed like the ceiling crashing down, falling on top of us, blocking all the light. I raised my hand and hit him, once, twice. I cannot remember it all. And then, in an instant, the noise disappeared.
>
> He was sitting on the floor, gasping, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry.'
>
> I knelt beside him, in shock. When I looked into his face, the bruise terrified me, I saw my child curled up, I smelled a burning in the room. (152; emphasis in original)

Kiri still tries to be close to her, he simply wants his mother to come back to him, to explain what is happening to her, to stop crying, "he said I had been crying for days" (152). In the night the boy wakes Janie from the nightmares that torment her. "He would crawl into the bed, saying that he was cold, that he did not want to sleep alone. I was afraid to hold my son" (153). Kiri tries to warm his mother, to save her from the coldness that has overtaken her, to bring her back to him. Without her knowledge, Kiri one day calls his father in London, "Bravely, he told Navin to return home, that I was ill. He didn't know how else to describe what we were going through" (153).

The family tries to continue going through the motions of school and work, "but something inside me, inside Navin, was dying. The broken world finally fell apart" (153) and Janie moves out to protect her son from her unpredictable rage. Significant for a study of representations of North in urban fiction, the anger inside Janie is associated with the color white: "I struggled to understand. I remembered a whiteness that came, debilitating, that I tried to remove from my body" (154). As noted previously, James's letters sapped the color from her world: "James's letters had opened something in me, and I began sliding into a numb melancholy. The world seemed bled of colour, yet I had vivid, exhausting dreams" (53). Kiri and other children are associated with bright colors in Thien's novel, their innocence and joy standing out in sharp contrast to the grey and white of Montreal in winter and Janie's cold,

empty, and confused state. Janie watches Kiri among the brightly colored snowsuits on the school playground. Her eyes follow him as her son is "embraced by the glow of the school. Snow hurries forward to lay its thin white sheet over the teeter-totters, the swings, and the monkey bars. Through the big windows, I can see a movement of colors, children swirling around one another. Even at the edge of the schoolyard, I can hear their voices" (30).[164] The colorfulness of the children's snowsuits, their exuberant voices and play are emphasized. Her son is warmth, color, action; she is cold, white, and slow, "moving with the slowness of the old" (25). Similarly, later in the novel, the passages describing the Khmer Rouge regime are marked by monotony and bland brutality, whereas Janie remembers her own childhood in Phnom Penh before the civil war as happy and characterized by color: "Endless colour and movement, a wonder before my eyes" (85).

Thus in this subchapter about winter in Montreal, Thien perpetuates received understandings of winter as a dark time when bad things happen. The cold, ice, and snow of Montreal, along with the peaceful banality of everyday life there, are juxtaposed with Cambodia's heat, lush foliage, and the brutal genocide. The cold of Montreal is unable to erase her memories; rather, they have been preserved and now have resurfaced during winter. Cold has crept into the core of Janie's being and she seems to never warm up. Her disturbed mental state is evidenced in how often she does not dress herself appropriately for the winter weather. Colors again have strong symbolic power in this example of nordicity in Montreal fiction, as happy children are associated with vivid colors and whiteness is a signifier of emptiness and numb violence. In the next section, I will explore a repeated trope in *Dogs at the Perimeter* related to the cold and overlapping with some of the passages from the novel cited above, that of the window.

6.2 Windows: Ambivalent Tropes of Hope and Protection

The reoccurrence of windows as a trope in *Dogs at the Perimeter* cannot be overlooked in even a cursory reading of the novel. The significance of the windows in Thien's narrative is elucidated on its final pages: Janie recalls the stories her mother used to tell her, passed down through the maternal generations in her family's native village.

[164] In this scene, as in many others discussed below in chapter 6.2, a window is between her and her son. The school is protective and positive as it embraces Kiri in warmth, something Janie cannot at this point do for him (Thien 2011, 28–30).

> My mother once told me that when a child is born, threads are tied around the infant's wrists to bind her soul to her body. The soul is a slippery thing. A door slammed too loudly can send it running. A beautiful, shining object can catch its attention and lure it away. But in darkness, unpursued, the soul, the *pralung*, can climb back in through an open window, it can be returned to you. (253)

Windows in Cambodian folklore are, then, an important passageway, a place of entering and exiting worlds, a means of regaining one's lost soul. An open window signifies possibilities, a chance for what is lost to "be returned to you" (253). This explains why Janie leaves the windows unlocked when she stays at Hiroji's apartment, hoping that he will somehow return. "For nearly a month now I have slept on his couch, leaving the curtains open as if I believe he will re-enter through the unlatched windows" (27). Windows are symbolic of the journey Janie is on from Cambodia to Canada, trying to both start a new life and a family of her own in Montreal, and hold on to the memories of her parents and brother in Cambodia. Throughout the novel we see a dichotomy of open and closed windows which I will explore in the next two subchapters.

6.2.1 Open Windows: Bearing Witness

Open windows are connoted with freedom and creativity in Thien's novel, for example for Elie, one of Hiroji's patients who suffered from a degenerative brain disease. At 58 years of age Elie begins to lose her ability to speak. She quits her job and paints manically for hours every day: "She closed the glass doors of her studio, unlatched the windows, lifted them high, and she painted. It was winter so she wore her coat over two shirts and fleece sweatpants, thick socks, Chinese slippers on her feet, and a woolen hat on her head" (Thien 2011, 11). The cold air coming into her home through the open windows seems to refresh and inspire creativity in Elie, reminiscent of the positive connotations of cold for Grace in Ohlin's *Inside* (see chapter 4.2.1).

Like Elie, Janie leaves her windows open and her coat on inside while staying at Hiroji's apartment, yet this is not a conscious, creative gesture but rather a result of her distracted and chaotic state of mind. "On the far side of the apartment, in Hiroji's small office, the windows are open and the curtains seem to move fretfully, willfully" (8), mimicking Janie's thoughts and actions. She drinks a bottle of wine, eats what is left in the nearly empty fridge, and falls asleep with her coat on. At 4 a.m. she awakens and goes to the window,

which now seems to be closed. “I open the curtains. […] Snowdrifts and frozen eaves merge into cars, outlined in inches of snow. On the frosted windowpanes, I trace Khmer letters” (17).

Earlier in her life, for example when she and Navin first met, Janie too had thrown open windows and enjoyed the cold, winter air, signifying a time when the burden of memory that currently plagues her lay dormant. She and Navin made love in the morning, against the backdrop of the sounds of people in his building getting up and ready for the day. “The building emptying, the air disappearing. I pushed the windows open, back then I craved the shock of air on my skin. […] He took me to hear ice melting on the St. Lawrence River, a steady crackling and firing,” (Thien 2011, 163–64). At that carefree time in her life, the cold and the ice were beautiful, enjoyable, and novel as that period coincided with her arrival in Montreal from the much milder climate of Vancouver. Years later, “something in me was changing. My brother was returning to me, so finely, so clearly, just as he had been at the end. I wanted to keep him near to me and yet, I told Hiroji, I couldn’t live with this memory” (146).

Janie’s memories from her childhood in Phnom Penh are also dotted with window references, despite most of the Cambodian narrative taking place outdoors, where Janie and the others are forced to march, work in fields and quarries, and sleep outside. During the Cambodian civil war, before Janie’s family was evicted from their apartment in Phnom Penh, the open window represented the danger of the outside world, where spies could be listening. “‘Shhh,’ my father said, smiling weakly, eyes drifting to the window where voices rose like applause and touched the curtains, then dissipated back into the street below” (90). On the final two pages of Thien’s novel, Janie recalls having observed an argument between her parents early in her childhood, and their subsequent reconciliation. In this situation, the window is again a place of transition, a passageway between her and her parents providing distance; she cannot enter into their relationship. “My childhood is full of images like this, passing moments I didn’t understand, as if I were looking through a window into the aftermath of a great event. […] What I saw this time was not an aftermath, but a window open to a different way of loving each other” (252). Again here, the positively connoted open window offers promise, a window of possibility for her parents to reconcile with each other after a disagreement.

Later, during the reign of the Khmer Rouge when she and Sopham are trying to comfort their hallucinating mother, Janie imagines her father coming to rescue her: “My father was there waiting for me. He held my hand and pulled me through a window and into a

hidden space" (Thien 2011, 84). Here, the window functions as a passageway into another life, an escape from the real hell the girl was enduring at the time, and into a hidden, safe space. She imagines her father as still able to protect her, despite the fact that he is already dead. The trauma the girl has endured causes a confluence of reality, memory, and fantasy. Upon boarding the boat that would smuggle her away from her homeland, in her mind Janie's deceased parents beckon to her once more: "Look back, my mother said, one last time. I followed her through our twilit apartment, walked in the shade of my father, past bare walls and open windows, the noise of the street pouring in" (135). Here the open windows are markers of a happy, safe, and secure chapter of Janie's childhood. She walked safely in the "shade of my father," the security her loving father was still at that point able to provide for the young girl. The street's noises were allowed to pour in unfettered, joyful sounds of a community not yet oppressed by fear and secrecy. It is as if Janie's mother wanted her to remember what her parents had indeed given her, what every parent longs to give their child: enough of a happy and safe childhood to see her through the rest of her life.

6.2.2 Closed Windows: Protection and Danger

The first reference to a window at the outset of Thien's narrative sets the scene in Montreal as a winter city: "Tonight's freezing rain has left the branches crystalline. Our home is on the second floor, west facing, reached by a twisting staircase, the white paint chipping off, rust burnishing the edges. Through the window, I can see my son" (Thien 2011, 5). Between Janie and her son, Kiri, whom she watches through the window from her car parked on the street one evening, the window acts as a separation between them, keeping them apart. Janie longs to be with her family, longs to "run up the stairs and turn my key in the lock, the door to my home swinging wide open. When my fear outweighs my need−fear that Kiri will look out the window and see this familiar car, that my son will see me−I turn the ignition, steer myself from the sidewalk, and roll away down the empty street" (6). At this point, the reader does not know why the mother is secretly watching her son through a window, (that is, two windows, the car's windshield and the apartment's window) rather than being inside with him. The reader does not know that their separation is of her own doing and choice. The window provides Janie with her only view of her beloved son, but, fearing being seen, she drives away. This emphasizes the dichotomy of the positive and negative aspects of seeing/being seen. The window separates her from her son, and she fears being seen through it, yet Janie values the protection the window provides, protecting her son from her unpredictable rages. The next day, when she meets Kiri and Navin at the schoolyard, she watches through the

school windows which again protect Kiri from his mother and the cold outside, as he is "embraced by the glow of the school. […] Through the big windows, I can see a movement of colors, children swirling around one another. Even at the edge of the schoolyard, I can hear their voices" (28−30).

In the narrated present, February 2006, Janie generally prefers windows closed for fear of the cold and ice getting at her. On the wine-drenched night in Hiroji's apartment referred to above, Janie feels: "There is no air in the apartment, but I don't want to open the windows as I fear that the ice will come inside" (Thien 2011, 25). She fears the ice taking over her soul, numbing her memories and numbing her towards her son as referred to above in 6.1 (see page 153 of the novel). Rather than opening the windows, she goes out into the cold, fresh air at four in the morning. Cabin fever presses down hard in Montreal in February, when the temperature often hovers for much of the month around -20 degrees Celsius and people spend most of their time indoors. As she walks the icy Montreal streets at night, wrestling with her demons, Janie is "drawn to the windows" (25), looking in at blue television screens, yet the windows remain as a barrier between her and the warmth and lives lived inside.

Thien does not feature monuments, buildings, or places of political or historical significance in her Montreal narrative. Only Mount Royal, the central topographical feature of the city, with its relatively wild spaces, is mentioned several times. When Janie goes into Hiroji's office at the Brain Research Centre to pack up their shared files several months after his disappearance, the mountain and the window in the room are noted: "Here is Hiroji's window with a view of the mountain. Here is his desk" (32). Morrin, the head of their research unit, joins her in Hiroji's office for a few minutes, but is clearly uncomfortable being there, especially near the window: "The office unnerves him. He goes to the window, glances out, and then returns to the relative safety of the door" (32). Here we see the multiple meanings of a window: as a vantage point from which to take in a scene and also as a place of vulnerability, a chance to be seen or observed by others looking in. Morrin feels he is in danger near the window, thus he retreats "to the relative safety" of the office door. In danger from what? The forested and snow-covered mountain? This calls to mind Margaret Atwood's claim that in Canadian literature, the North is a malevolent monster out to get you. In her 1995 book *Strange Things*, Atwood sums up popular English Canadian lore's traditional conception of the North as "uncanny, awe-inspiring in an almost religious way, hostile to white men, but alluring; that it would lead you on and do you in; that it would drive you crazy, and, finally, would claim you for its own" (Atwood 1995, 19). Morrin acts as though he

is being watched from outside the window, and does not want to be seen going through a colleague's things. If indeed it is the mountain watching him through the window, this is a subtle continuation of the motif in Canadian Literature of personifying the North, in this case the snow-dipped mountain in the heart of the city, as a dangerous beast out to get you.

To sum up this subchapter on the trope of windows in *Dogs at the Perimeter*, I have demonstrated that the open window allows for opportunities for lost things (souls, loved ones, memories) to return, and is positively connoted with creativity. The closed window is more complex. It represents a binary of both protection and danger. Windows function as a place to view/be viewed, depending on one's position. A window allows one to have a vantage point from which to be an observer, a witness. The closed windows that stand between Kiri and Janie offer Kiri protection from his mother's violent outbursts. Windows also protect from the bitter cold of winter in Montreal when closed. During Janie's childhood in Cambodia, open windows signified a happy and carefree era, while later windows were kept closed to protect the family from spies who might overhear their conversations. Thus windows were somewhat mistrusted and presented a duality of danger and safety.

6.3 Carrying the Weight of Memory

Dogs at the Perimeter explores the relationship between memory and trauma, healing and letting go, within the context of seasonal nordicity in Montreal. In the novel, Janie writes down her memories in order to process them, which contributes to her healing, as was discussed in chapter 5 in relation to the trauma of the 1998 Montreal Ice Storm. Madeleine Thien writes this novel to remember the Cambodian genocide and bear witness to its atrocities, often overlooked in Western historical discourse. Thien ties the fate of many Cambodian refugees to Canada and intertwines Janie's past and present in this moving narrative.

Janie feels obligated to carry the memory of her family into her new life in Canada. Before she escapes on the boat, Janie has a vision of her mother who gives her this precise command: "I felt her in the persistent drumming of water against the boat's hull. Guard the ones you love, she told me. *Carry us* with you into the next life. Exhausted, holding tight to my brother, we set out across the sea" (Thien 2011, 135). In Vancouver, later, she tells her adopted mother Lena of this sense of obligation to carry the memories of her dead loved ones: "I thought of my friend Bopha, about my brother, Sopham, and my parents, I wanted to tell Lena that we were too many, that I needed to guard the world that held us all together. *I was*

afraid that I would drop it, shatter it, let it break apart" (24). This passage emphasizes the weight Janie as a teenager is quite literally carrying, and her fear of dropping her loved ones. The Khmer Rouge had tried to erase their memories, to make them forget their loved ones, their former jobs, their lives: "The Khmer Rouge had taught us how to survive, walking alone, carrying nothing in our hands. Belongings were slid away, then family and loved ones, and then finally our loyalties and ourselves. Worthless or precious, indifferent or loved, all of our treasures had been treated the same" (39). Under the Angkar government, to long for the old life was betrayal. Memories were the enemy: "Memory sickness, Kosal called it. An illness of the mind" (79). Later, the teenaged girl struggles with survivor's guilt: "I remembered arriving in Canada, my stomach clenched, ashamed that I had lived yet terrified of disappearing" (21). For a time, Meng's words and those of her foster mother, Lena, are able to help her go on living. Later, in Montreal in February 2006, Janie's memories of her family catch up with her. "Night after night I tried to bring back the ones I had left behind. In the mornings, when I opened my eyes, I saw only the bare walls. Everything, the good and the selfish, the loved and the feared, had taken refuge inside me. Thirty years later and still I remembered everything" (154).

As Janie's memories travel through her mind, she too is on a journey. The Montreal component of the narrative is notably marked by movement: driving her car away from her family's apartment, where she looked through Kiri's window at the outset, walking the city, and riding the bus and the metro. Her movement through the city keeps time with her mind as Janie travels through her past in search of peace. Indeed, the entire novel is marked by a fluid spatiality, as in the Cambodian parts of the narrative Janie's family is moved from one place to another around Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge, she and Sopham escape through the caves to Vietnam, and eventually she journeys to Vancouver. Later, when she visits James and Hiroshi in Laos, she is again traveling by plane and bus during most of the narration.

While Janie stays in Hiroji's vacant apartment in Montreal, she articulates the link that bonds her with him, who has never confirmed what happened to his brother, James: "Hiroji knew what it was to have the missing live on, unending, within us. They grow so large, and we so empty, that even the coldest winter nights won't swallow them" (9). Montreal's cold is, then, meant to help Janie and Hiroji forget, but just as it did not help Tug in *Inside* to forget what he had seen in Rwanda,[165] the memories of their families still live on. Janie indicates

[165] Rather, walking the city in the cold and seeing children play ice hockey triggers Tug's memories and causes him to collapse in tears, see chapter 4.2.2.

that she has traveled far from Cambodia to escape her past, but "the things I have done can't be forgiven. My own hands seem to mock me, they tell me the further I go to escape, the greater the distance I must travel back. You should never have left the reservoir, you should have stayed in the caves" (10). Her accusatory thoughts refer to the reservoir where she worked as a slave to the Khmer Rouge and the caves through which she fled with her brother, Sopham, when they escaped to Vietnam. She cannot forgive herself for not saving Sopham from drowning, or for hitting her son Kiri ("My own hands seem to mock me").

The parallels between Janie's brother Sopham, aged eight and nine during the Cambodian genocide section of Thien's narrative, and Janie's son Kiri, who is now seven or eight years old, are numerous.[166] Though Janie never explicitly or consciously links the two boys, it is quite possible that her son reaching the age her brother was when the genocide began is also a trigger for Janie's memories. Looking at her young son likely reminds Janie of her lost brother and her inability to save him. Just as Sopham tied Janie's wrist to the piece of wood to save her after the shipwreck, Janie wishes she could "tie my son's wrist to mine with a piece of string and in this way save us both. It's in the night, I know, that the ones we love disappear" (38). This is a direct reference to the story Janie's mother passed down to her from Cambodian folklore that explains the tradition of tying a baby's wrist with thread to bind her soul to her body (253; see also above in 6.2). As this is only revealed on the final page of the novel, the casual reader might not notice the link. Janie fears losing her son when her mind is scattered and weighed down with memories, and she is unable to talk to him about it or explain her actions. Throughout the narrative, Janie struggles to maintain these threads tying her to her deceased brother and her living son, who is now also living separated from her. Janie wrestles with the duality of memory and loss, when it is time to bind together or let go. At two different points, Janie watches both Kiri and Sopham sleep, their rhythmic breathing calming her. Before her separation from her husband and son, on sleepless nights Janie "used to tiptoe down the hallway and stand in Kiri's open doorway. […] The sound of his breaths calmed me" (16−17). Likewise, in the cave during their escape from Cambodia, she remained awake while Sopham slept, keeping guard over him, "listening to my brother's breathing, his exhaled words. I told myself that I could protect him. The love I felt for him was like air,

[166] Early in the novel, it is stated that "Kiri is in grade two" (6). Children must be age 6 by September 30 of the year they enter grade one in Montreal, thus Kiri is at least seven and possibly eight years old by February of grade two.

everywhere inside me, pushing me on" (129−30). Put alongside each other, the symmetry between the two boys is striking as Janie tries to protect them both, but fails them.[167]

On the final pages of the novel, Janie remembers the legend her mother had taught her, mentioned above, about open windows allowing the soul to return to you. "Inside us, from the beginning, we were entrusted with many lives. From the first morning to the last, we try to carry them until the end" (Thien 2011, 252–53). Here again the emphasis is on *carrying* multiple lives. Janie tries to carry and remember her childhood as a happy girl in Phnom Penh, to bear witness to her experience suffering as Mei in the work camps, her teenaged years as Janie in Vancouver, and as an adult scientist, wife, and mother in Montreal. She must reconcile these different identities, the chapters of her own life, in addition to carrying the memories of the lives of her deceased family members, to memorialize them.

Preserving the weight of this memory is the primary aim of the novel, from which it gleans its title: "Between us, [my mother] said, I had known love, I had lived a childhood that might sustain me. I remembered beauty. Long ago, it had not seemed necessary to note its presence to memorize it, to set the dogs out at the perimeter" (135). This is the only reference in the novel to its intriguing title, thus the title prominence of the line "dogs at the perimeter," denotes the importance of this passage. The centrality of preserving memory is revealed. Janie's memories are like guard dogs that she sets out at the perimeter of her mind, of her life, to bear witness to her family and her happy childhood, to the beauty of Cambodia before the Khmer Rouge occupation. Setting dogs out at the perimeter will help Janie to guard and to remember the love, safety, and innocence of her early childhood with her family.

[167] Hiroji and Janie are both trying to make peace with their memories of their brothers. Although Hiroji eventually tracks down his brother James, living all these years in Laos, he does not get the closure and happy ending he had hoped for. His brother barely recognizes him and does not seem to need or want him. Hiroji is embarrassed and feels lost, not knowing how to explain why he disappeared to anyone back in Montreal. He has done what Janie wishes she could do, he has been reunited with his brother after 30 years. "'But now I'm here, and he's here, and ... there's no way for me to cross the last few steps.' He smiled, embarrassed. 'I had pictured things so differently'" (170). Yet discovering James still alive does no good, it does not even provide the peace of closure as it raises more questions in Hiroji's mind. Memory sometimes leads astray, and the attempts to rectify wrongs of the past are not needed or wanted. He is angry that James never tried to come home to Canada or contact him. "Why was it that forgetting James was like cutting off his hand, but his brother had chosen to live an entire life away from them? […] He would accept that he had been the only one looking, it was his own guilt that had driven him here" (245). When Hiroji goes to see James, his brother does not really acknowledge or talk to him. "He could leave now. This room would still exist, his brother would still be here, but the cut glass inside himself would no longer pain him. It was finished. Wasn't that good enough?" (Thien 2011, 247–48)

6.3.1 Trauma Fiction

Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*, like Ohlin's *Inside* (see chapter 4) and Proulx's "Banana Chaudfroid" (discussed in chapter 5.4), notably uses the discourse of nordicity to explore collective and individual trauma and healing. The Cambodian genocide obviously fulfills the criteria of a collective trauma, as defined by Saul (2014, 3) and cited in chapter 5. Janie, as well as Tug in Ohlin's *Inside*, suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, "first included in the diagnostic canon of the medical and psychiatric professions" in 1980, also marking the "origin of contemporary trauma studies" (Whitehead 2004, 4). Saul notes that "people who suffer from individual trauma usually have difficulty recovering if the community to which they belong remains shattered" (Saul 2014, 4). Not only did the Khmer Rouge wreak devastation on the whole of Cambodian society, Janie's family was shattered as well. The twelve-year-old girl is thus left, alone in the world, adopted into a new country, to try to recover from trauma on her own, and separated from her shattered community.

As stated above, Montreal's cold was meant to numb Hiroji's and Janie's memories of their lost loved ones, but really it serves more as a freezer, preserving their memories until an opportune time when these memories are "opened" (Thien 2011, 53) and must be confronted. Whitehead explains: "Trauma emerges as that which, at the very moment of its reception, registers as a non-experience, causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead 2004, 5). It is only 30 years later that Janie is revisited by traumatic memories, and she acts out in rage and violence. Thien's novel distinctly classifies as "trauma fiction." The rise of this genre in recent decades is "inseparable from the turn to memory in literary and historical studies" (Whitehead 2004, 81). Whitehead goes on to enumerate key stylistic features recurring in trauma fiction narratives: "These include intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice. Novelists draw, in particular, on literary techniques that mirror at a formal level the effects of trauma" (Whitehead 2004, 84). An example of the fragmented narrative voice in Thien's novel is a convoluted passage on pages 61 through 64, demonstrating how traumatic memories blend together and arrest Janie on the street in Montreal. There is a mélange of memories from her childhood, bombing, running with her brother and father, and the present reality of a Montreal street scene. It begins with Janie walking onto "the wide boulevard of Côte-des-Neiges" (Thien 2011, 61) where she sees the queue for the downtown bus with "a half-dozen men and women lost inside their winter coats, a light snow falling on us, as fine as sand" (61). People's shapes are morphed and unrecognizable within their winter coats, causing a disorienting effect. The smell of coffee

from a nearby bakery triggers a memory from her childhood in which she and Sopham hide from an air raid:

> 'The bombs are coming,' I tell him. 'They are coming, they are coming.'
>
> I feel my legs floating, as if I am flying through the streets.
>
> I'm standing at the intersection of Côte-des-Neiges and Queen Mary, snow settling on us, and a woman tells her child, *We are safe as houses*. The saying falls straight through me. The light turns green, nothing approaches, I begin to walk, and the low buildings seem to bend over me. I see my father in the shape of another person, walking up ahead. […] I run up to the man who is not my father, grab his elbow, and spin him around to face me. A stranger swears and flings me away.
>
> I am home again, inside the safety of our apartment, my father is standing behind me, dictating the words I have to transcribe. […]
>
> Someone says my Canadian name. *Janie*. Another woman turns and waves. I am standing in Montreal, on a white winter day, beneath unfamiliar buildings. I look everywhere for Janie. There are no trees, no forest anywhere, nothing to keep the light from falling through. (Thien 2011, 63−64)

In this passage which so eloquently exhibits the trauma-fraught mind, Thien uses snow and cold strikingly as a marker of place and time, clearly distinguishing for the reader what is present reality and what is memory. This device would not be effective had Thien set her Montreal component of the narrative in summer, resulting in less obvious and brief markers of difference between Montreal and Cambodia. Whitehead argues that

> literary fiction offers the flexibility and the freedom to be able to articulate the resistance and impact of trauma. While traditional literary realism may not be suited for rendering traumatic events, I have argued that the more experimental forms emerging out of postmodernist and postcolonial fiction offer the contemporary novelist a promising vehicle for communicating the unreality of trauma, while still remaining faithful to the facts of history. (Whitehead 2004, 87)

Thien's novel holds to these tenets, poignantly flitting between realism and disjointed memory, present and past, and from the perspectives of one character to the next in order to portray a rounded portrait of the Cambodian genocide and its impacts on a family and a

nation. Whitehead questions "whether trauma itself is a content or a form. The knowledge of trauma is composed of two contradictory elements. One is the traumatic event, which is registered rather than experienced. The other is a kind of memory of the event, which takes the form of a perpetual troping of it by the split or dissociated psyche" (Whitehead 2004, 162). The "split or dissociated psyche" describes what is happening inside of Janie when she hits her son. She is unable to control or explain her actions; the rage comes over and also recedes quickly. The novel contains different layers of witnessing: Janie bears witness to her own trauma experience, as well as to that of her brother, father, and mother.[168] She is also the vehicle through which Hiroji, James, and Nuong's traumatic memories are recounted and relayed to the reader. Janie also bears witness to the trauma she inflicts on her own son, Kiri.

6.4 Conclusion: Releasing the Dogs from the Perimeter

Madeleine Thien sets out to bear witness to the atrocities of the oft-forgotten Cambodian genocide of the 1970s and succeeds in memorializing lives lost and the trauma its survivors fight to come to terms with still today in a country as far away and different from Cambodia as Canada. The cold of Montreal is a counter-balance to the heat of Cambodia, the winter acting as a preserving method, freezing Janie's memories until such a time as is right for them to resurface and be dealt with. The snow that blankets Montreal in beauty and attempts to purify Janie's memories is also revealed to be a mirage, blowing away and being dirtied by slush and grime in Thien's realistic portrayal of a Montreal winter.

Windows are an important trope throughout the novel, symbolizing a passage between Janie's present reality and memories of her past. Open windows signify times of peace in Janie's happy childhood before the war, and most importantly symbolize a way for people and souls to return to each other. Closed windows are more complex, bringing both protection from the cold and standing as a needed safeguard between Janie and her son, Kiri. They also represent the fear of being seen or heard by the threatening world outside.

The burden of carrying her family's memory and bearing witness to what they and she suffered at the hands of the Khmer Rouge catches up with Janie as an adult in Montreal, almost crippling her and tearing apart her own family. At last, Janie takes agency over her own life and travels to Laos, following Hiroji and meeting his long-lost brother, James, who also survived the Cambodian genocide. Allowing the full weight of memory to course through

[168] The different layers of witnessing in *Dogs at the Perimeter* are similar to Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces*, as pointed out in Whitehead 2004, 8.

her is the means by which Janie is finally able to come to terms with her traumatic past in Cambodia.

Notable for a novel set in Montreal, Thien makes no mention of the French language or interaction with francophones. Janie and her husband Navin are allophones, non-native speakers of either French or English, examples of the multicultural tapestry that makes up Montreal. Given that Janie works at an English-speaking university research facility and there is no mention of French, her characters represent some of the many students, scholars, and foreign workers who may choose to live "in English only" within Montreal, moving in anglophone circles and not brushing shoulders nearly at all with French-speaking people or institutions. Thien's novel is not concerned with linguistic groups, politics, or national pedagogies, though she does perpetuate some English Canadian tropes of winter as being a menacing season in which bad things happen, and Montreal's Mount Royal as a potential monster ready to attack, à la Atwood's observations of recurring themes in Canadian literature in *Strange Things* (1995). Thien is concerned with bearing witness to the atrocities of the Cambodian genocide and the inner struggles of a refugee rebuilding her life in Canada, telling the untold story of thousands of so-called "new Canadians" who have come to Canada as a result of traumatic circumstances. The discourse of nordicity with its cold, ice, and snow figure prominently in that quest to "narrate the unnarratable" (Whitehead 2004, 4), an haunting and poignant example of the genre of trauma fiction increasingly written and studied today.

7 Conclusion: Spatiality, Social Practices, and Trauma in the Nordic City

Seasonal nordicity brings the North, a founding myth in both English Canadian and Québécois literature and culture, to bear on urban space. Even as Canada urbanized throughout the twentieth century, this study has shown how central the "idea of North" or *imaginaire du nord* remains today in the Canadian and Québécois psyche. In twenty-first century literature, claiming the North as a space of identification and a pertinent and potent motif permeates urban fiction in both English Canada and Quebec. This study has narrowed its gaze to the fiction emanating from Montreal, a creative, functionally bilingual, major urban center.

At the outset of my research, I began by asking "Where is North?" I first needed to explore how North is defined in English Canadian literature and cultural studies, and to determine whether this differed from the Québécois understanding of North. As I have demonstrated in chapter 2, the North is one of the founding myths of both English Canadian and Québécois culture, yet the development of the idea of North, or *imaginaire du nord*, in the two cultures is rooted in different historical events and cultural references. After taking into account Hamelin's nordicity index and the concept of seasonal nordicity, the North coming south to inhabit large Canadian cities during the winter, I questioned whether seasonal nordicity is a factor in English Canadian urban fiction as much as it is in Québécois literature. With my text corpus focused on anglophone and francophone Montreal fiction, I centered in on two fundamental research questions: 1) how does seasonal nordicity affect the spatiality of the city in the narratives? And 2) how does seasonal nordicity change the social practices of the urbanites represented in twenty-first century Montreal fiction? Answers to these questions will be summarized from this study and compiled in the following sub-chapter.

7.1 Findings

This study explores how seasonal nordicity is represented in the collective imaginary of Montreal literature. In chapter 2, I sought to answer the question of what and where "North" is, fundamental for the rest of this study. Each person may have their own definition of North based on their own location and experience. In this study, I have elucidated the various definitions of North put forward by scholars to date, and geographer Louis-Edmond Hamelin's nordicity index was explained. I established the subsequent understanding of North as a discursive system and not merely a quantifiable geographical location. I went on to delineate the historical and cultural development of the Québécois *imaginaire du nord* as well

as Quebec's special claim to nordicity. Next, the English Canadian "Idea of North" was traced through history as the Canadian government and cultural elites used it to foster national unity. I subsequently defined seasonal nordicity, that is, winter occurring in places that do not experience Arctic influences all year round, as the channel by which we can include large cities, even in the south of Canada, as being part of "the North." The concept of seasonal nordicity (*hivernité*), thereby considering Montreal and in fact all of the territory of Québec as the "North," is common and accepted in Québécois literary scholarship but has up until now not been adopted by the English Canadian literary academy. I concluded chapter 2 by comparing and contrasting the two cultural nations' "ideas of North" and it became apparent that they have developed parallel to each other, rather than providing one uniting myth.

After introducing the North in the city, chapter 3 considers the development of urban fiction in English Canada and Quebec throughout the twentieth century. I defined first of all the differences between the terms "city fiction" and "urban fiction," and why I use the latter term, as Rosenthal (2011) has established that "city fiction" should be reserved for modernist texts. After demonstrating why urban fiction was so slow to develop in English Canadian literature−which had a long love affair with the wilderness and the small town as the site of its identity−I then returned to Québécois urban fiction which developed earlier, in the 1940s. A limitation of the present study is the ability to providing an exhaustive answer to the question of whether seasonal nordicity is used as a motif in English Canadian urban fiction to the same extent as it is in Québécois literature. The scope of this study was circumscribed to anglophone and francophone Montreal fiction, but future research could be expanded to studies of other Canadian cities, as well as other genres such as poetry and drama. This would provide a broader picture of the role of seasonal nordicity in urban fiction on a national, coast-to-coast, level. Yet the results of my research as presented in the literary-historical overviews provided in chapters 2 and 3 lead me to posit that seasonal nordicity is indeed a recurring and noticeable motif in urban fiction throughout English Canada, just as it is in francophone Québécois fiction. I suspect, however, that a quantitative study analyzing Nordic characters, tropes, images, and symbols would reveal that urban Québécois fiction is even more preoccupied with nordicity than its English Canadian counterpart.

In chapters 4 through 6 I analyze my text corpus of recent Montreal fiction to investigate how seasonal nordicity is represented in both anglophone and francophone writing. In these chapters, I answer the research questions stated in the introduction, primarily by focusing on two ways winter impacts the city: spatiality and changing social practices.

7.1.1 Winter Spatiality in Contemporary Montreal Fiction

This study has examined how Montreal writers explore the relationships between people and their place in the city, within the larger context of the Montreal city-space as a site of North. When introducing the concepts of place, space, and heterotopia in chapter 1.3, I asked a number of questions to stimulate reflection on which places and spaces in the city the writers in my text corpus would focus on: whether or not they inhabit places of historical or national significance or if differences between anglophone and francophone writers' uses of space would become apparent. I wondered whether characters would stay indoors, hiding from the elements of Montreal winters or if they would embrace the cold, outdoor winter space. No locations or monuments of political or historical significance are mentioned in my twenty-first century text corpus, and these patterns are maintained for both anglophone and francophone fiction. Rather, the authors in my text corpus fixate on the microspaces of Montreal when indoors: the characters' apartments, offices, and cafés, as well as public transport (bus, metro) and taxis. The only named and significant monument, present in most of my corpus, is Mount Royal, the most distinctive topographical feature of the city, notably merging wild nature with the urban narratives in keeping with traditions of bringing the North and nature into both English Canadian and Québécois literature, as discussed in chapter 2.3.2.

Additionally, in this project I have taken note of which public spaces are used and enjoyed by the characters of my text corpus to determine how "life between buildings," to borrow urbanist Gehl's phrase, goes on in Montreal in winter. The analysis has shown that indoor, heated public spaces are uniformly portrayed as negative heterotopias in my text corpus: the Biodôme, hospitals, and shopping malls in Alix Ohlin's *Inside* are dangerous environments where injuries and abuses occur. Likewise in the Ice Storm narratives of chapter 5, the emergency shelters are insufferable common areas hosting thievery, gangs, pedophiles, and sleepless nights. Even Gabrielle's home in Monique Proulx's "Banana Chaudfroid" becomes a quasi-public space when she invites in a family of strangers from one of the shelters, and her apartment, too, becomes unbearable. Janie, the survivor of the Cambodian genocide in Madeleine Thien's *Dogs at the Perimeter*, often has to go "out, out" into Montreal's frigid streets to process the traumatic memories gripping her. In all of the texts in my corpus, other dynamics are at play which privilege an engagement with outdoor, cold public spaces, in contrast to the natural assumption that indoor, heated spaces would be pleasurable. As the protagonists spend a great deal of time outside in the city's streets and parks, the cold, fresh air is a refuge in all of the novels and the short story. Indeed, the entire city-space of Montreal becomes a heterotopia, a mirror image of reality in which change can

occur: In the Ice Storm texts the entire city becomes an uncanny, abnormal space counter to ordinary urban routines, opening up the possibility for people to change. In *Dogs at the Perimeter*, Montreal in winter is a heterotopic counter-space to Cambodia, allowing Janie to process at last what she has endured, to recover from trauma, and come to peace with her survivor's guilt.

As mentioned in the Introduction, chapter 1.3.2, the motif of walking the city, à la de Certeau, is common in my text corpus rather than the modernist conception of the flâneur. By walking (or skiing, or skating) the city, the characters in my text corpus are able to process trauma and appropriate their own place in the city space. They rarely observe the city itself or analyze the crowds; rather they are preoccupied with processing their own complicated inner lives. Daniel Chartier, as cited in chapter 2.4.2, explains that in Quebec literature, seasonal nordicity "brings the issues dealt with permanently in the far North into territories farther south. This brings the challenges associated with the northern climate to interrupt the narrative with a physical challenge, which is meant to be an inner test. […] Man thinks he is confronting nature, but quickly realises that the only true confrontation is within himself" (Chartier 2006, 38). There are no significant physical challenges for the characters of my text corpus (except dealing with the Ice Storm of 1998 in the two narratives discussed in chapter 5). Rather, I have demonstrated that in twenty-first century Montreal fiction, the conflict is generally a *psychological* confrontation between the man/woman and him/herself, in which the winter's cold, ice, and snow facilitate reconciliation. As Chartier asserts above, surviving the winter's cold, ice, and snow is not truly the issue, "the only true confrontation is within" the characters. In Ohlin's *Inside*, Grace and Mitch are on the verge of reconciliation at the end of the novel, a decade after they divorced, with Mitch beginning to enjoy being outside with Grace in Montreal's cold, winter space. Tug, however, is unable to reconcile with the traumatic memories of the Rwandan genocide and the guilt he feels, and commits suicide. My analyses found that in spite of winter's cold and often potentially dangerous outdoor conditions, such as walking on icy sidewalks, the characters in my text corpus are not limited in their movements through the city. In fact, walking the city in winter marks all of the texts. Both Tug and Mitch walk the city not to observe it but to forget painful memories. They walk the city in the cold to lose themselves (see chapter 4.2.3.3). Grace, who has always enjoyed winter, more often skis the city's large parks, the fresh, cold air and pristine snow helping her to process her thoughts.

Similarly, in *Dogs at the Perimeter* by Madeleine Thien, discussed in chapter 6.1, protagonist Janie also wrestles with trauma and the inner test of how to overcome angry and violent outbursts against her son Kiri which have resurfaced after she read Hiroji's brother James's letters. Janie wanders Montreal's streets all the way "North," where the island of Montreal ends at Rivière des Prairies. As she walks, Janie relives her past during the Cambodian genocide and tries to find a way forward in her present life with her son and husband. When she reaches the end of the island, she calls her old friend Meng and begins to take agency over her life; discovering where Hiroji has gone Janie then follows him to Laos and is able to come to terms with her traumatic past and move forward into a healthy future with her husband and son. Janie walks, noticeably, on a north-south axis through the city, as does Dany Laferrière's protagonist mentioned in chapter 3.3.3, rather than the traditional east-west crosstown voyages of past Montreal fiction preoccupied with language divides, as I pointed out in chapter 1.3.2.

The Ice Storm fictions analyzed in chapter 5 do not use walking the city to process trauma, rather, the characters are living through a traumatic disaster as the narratives unfold. In the short story "Banana Chaudfroid," the protagonist Gabrielle walks the dangerous, ice-covered downtown streets taking photographs of the North's violent beauty. When the tension in her apartment due to her houseguests, storm shelter refugees, becomes insufferable, Gabrielle goes out to escape them and finds the destruction caused by the Ice Storm too brutal to photograph. Later, by appropriating the city space on ice skates with the boy, Wayne, Gabrielle claims her own space in the icy city, coming to appreciate the boy, the ice, and the potential for new beginnings created by the Ice Storm. Pierre Szalowski's *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons* involves less transversal movement through the city than Thien's and Ohlin's novels, understandable as movements were limited by the closed roads and dangers of the Ice Storm. Nevertheless, Szalowski's cast of neighborhood characters spends a good portion of the novel outdoors, walking around their local neighborhood or standing on the street chatting. There are several falls and injuries in this novel from walking the icy city, but these bring only positive results in the final analysis as romantic couples are formed due to slipping on the ice (Boris and Julie; the school principal and someone with the same injury whom she meets at the hospital; and the narrator's father, Martin's broken arms assist him in a rapprochement with his wife, Anne). Thus, we can surmise that walking the winter city is a positive and life-affirming motif in the Montreal fiction of my text corpus, as the characters are not severely limited in their movements due to winter's perceived inconveniences. Rather, conquering the challenges of ice and snow on city sidewalks often brings a sense of joy,

freedom, and accomplishment as the "entire city became their city," to paraphrase Proulx (1999, 127).

7.1.2 Nordic Social Practices in Contemporary Montreal Fiction

I explained in chapter 3 that in Montreal fiction in the twenty-first century, nordicity is not used to make nationalist or political statements but concentrates on the psychological, inner lives of the characters; their interaction with the city-space is of great importance, not the linguistic debates observed in Quebec literature of the 1970s through 1990s. The novels in my text corpus, regardless of the language of expression, are preoccupied with the city and the inner lives of their characters, and use seasonal nordicity as an important motif in exploring the relationship between the two. At the same time, contemporary writers from Montreal, in both French and English, are intent on the "interweaving of the global and local dimensions of culture […]. Their intertwining is a sign of a meshing of belongings and of points of meeting which define québécois literature as a contact zone" (Leclerc and Simon 2005, 29). This is clearly evident in both Ohlin and Thien's novels, in which characters travel to and interact with numerous other countries and cultures, while at the same time being firmly rooted in the lived, urban space of Montreal. Additionally, in Szalowski's novel Boris, the Russian PhD student, links the local Montreal characters to the circumpolar world, also through his interactions with Albertans. Furthermore, the family in Proulx's short story is clearly at a "point of meeting" with Gabrielle as they stay in the small apartment together there is a clash of cultures and social class even within Quebec, and questions of belonging are raised in this narrative as well.

In contrast to modernist city fiction, which positioned the individual lost in the crowd, a depersonalized collective, twenty-first century Montreal fiction focuses on the individual in relationships with others: family (Thien), lovers (Ohlin), neighbors (Szalowski), strangers (Proulx), and with the winter city space itself. I asked in chapter 2.4.2.1 if there is intimacy and harmony between winter and urban society in my text corpus, based on an assertion made by Hamelin that seasonal nordicity changes social practices – technology, municipal policies, and attitudes of citizens (see Hamelin 1996, 253). This study has thus analyzed the effects of winter on social practices and spatiality in Montreal as depicted in fictional discourse. Although some municipal policies and technologies are casually represented in the texts, attitudes of individual citizens towards winter are front and center. As opposed to isolating the characters alone at home, in my text corpus the cold, ice, and snow of seasonal nordicity

unexpectedly bring people together. The Ice Storm of 1998 forges new friendships and romantic relationships in *Le froid modifie la trajectoire des poissons*, as neighbors get to know each other, and overcome prejudices and class divides. Reconciliation occurs between both the narrator's parents and those of his best friend. In Proulx's "Banana Chaudfroid," wealthy and privileged Gabrielle invites a blue collar family of strangers to live with her and although no lasting bonds are forged, the experience forces her to realize her own privileged situation as well as her desire to have a child. At the end of Ohlin's *Inside*, Mitch and Grace seem to be on the verge of reconciling and even troubled Anne passes them in the park, having returned to cold Montreal a decade after running away from home, hinting at a possible reconciliation with her parents and her development into a more mature woman distancing herself from the unhealthy behaviors she exhibited in New York and California. And for Janie in *Dogs at the Perimeter*, the winter is the season in which she is able to plumb the depths of her traumatic past and reconcile with her dead relatives as well as her living ones. Seasonal nordicity thus encourages increased social interaction, especially between neighbors and strangers, in my text corpus.

Trauma has been mentioned at various turns throughout these concluding findings, and the emergence of this theme in my text corpus was one of the discoveries of this study, not a precursor to it. Traumatic events emerged in all of my texts as the various characters lived through the genocides of Rwanda and Cambodia, rape, suicides, tragic family deaths, divorces, abortions, and a large-scale "natural" disaster with lasting repercussions on Montreal as a whole and on individuals. Significantly, seasonal nordicity, that is the North in the city, is a unifying factor in helping all of the characters to process and recover from trauma. Only the character of Tug in Ohlin's *Inside* is unable to bear what he has endured and witnessed, and kills himself on Mount Royal in April, four months after Grace rescued him from his first attempt. In the Ice Storm narratives, it is the intensified occurrence of seasonal nordicity which causes the trauma, yet in these two texts the disaster has positive implications on the characters' lives. As Saul has asserted, public spaces, communal activities, and collective narration are key to healing a community from trauma (see chapter 5), and these novels participate in a form of collective narration offering seasonal nordicity as a state in which such healing is possible.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

This study seeks to contribute to existing theories and understandings of North. One aim of this project has been to explore how nordicity affects the city space and the characters that inhabit it, as "Space is not simply a passive reflection of social and cultural trends, but an active participant" (Warf and Arias 2009, 10). My research is consistent with the theoretical understandings of North put forward by Louis-Edmond Hamelin (1978), Daniel Chartier (2006, 2007c, 2010), and Sherrill Grace (2001), as elucidated in chapters 1 and 2, who understand "the North" to be a discursive system of signs, symbols, representations, and imagination, not simply a fixed, geographical location.

I have posited in 1.3.1 that by bringing the North to the city, it becomes a placed space, integrally involved in Canada's lived, everyday urban places. Although there is undoubtedly an actual, geographical North, this study has been preoccupied with the constructed discourse of North as it is reflected in English Canadian and Québécois fiction. In chapter 2, I have shown how the myth of North is central to nationalist discourse in both English Canada and also Quebec, as the nordicity of Quebec has also been a defining symbol of the nationalist Québécois movement. By adopting Louis-Edmond Hamelin's concept of seasonal nordicity using his nordicity index, a snow storm in an urban area can temporarily northify a location, thus seasonal nordicity is the state of winter occurring in a place that does not have cold or snow all year round. I have studied Québécois and English Canadian literature comparatively, rather than subsuming the former under the latter as does Grace (2001). My work is also positioned as a continuation of Hamelin's understanding of seasonal nordicity to include the city in my definition of "North," which contradicts the separation of the North and the urban put forward by Grace, Caroline Rosenthal (2009), and Justin D. Edwards and Douglas Ivison (2005). I have thus posited that nordicity can and does co-exist with the city, in both English Canadian and Québécois literature. My work could influence the debate within the discourse of the North, especially in English Canadian literary criticism and encourage further comparative research between francophone and anglophone literature. The implications of this study are that urban fiction in all languages and from other large urban centers that experience seasonal nordicity can be considered in studies of "the North" in literature. This is of relevance to literary scholars and students of English Canadian and Québécois literature, as my research expands studies of "the North" to include a more diverse and urban text corpus.

7.3 Perspectives on Further Research

As mentioned above, this study had to be delimited to anglophone and francophone Montreal fiction, but research into the relationship between urban fiction and seasonal nordicity could be expanded to studies of other Canadian cities (such as Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Halifax, St. John's), as well as other literary genres beyond fiction. It would also be rewarding to include urban Aboriginal writing to investigate how nordicity in the city relates to a more fundamental attachment to ancestral lands often located more geographically northwards than the cities in which many Aboriginal writers and/or characters now find themselves living.

I have established a significant relationship between trauma fiction and nordicity in my text corpus, and further research in this field would be both interesting and could have a significant impact on both trauma fiction and studies of representations of North in literature. Continued investigations into the relationship between winter disasters such as the Ice Storm and cultural representations thereof are needed, as "natural" disasters are becoming more frequent and devastating in the twenty-first century. It can be argued whether this is a result of global warming, increased population density due to massive urbanization, war, globalization, or our increased dependence on technology. When technologies fail, such as heat, electricity, telephone or internet service, our society comes to a standstill, and loss of life is often the result. Scholars in fields as diverse as disaster-response, forestry, atmospheric science, and psychology have investigated the causes and effects of the Ice Storm of 1998. Despite much excellent work on the *imaginaire du nord* (Chartier 2004, 2006, 2007c, 2010, 2014) and "the idea of North" (Grace 2001; see also R. Shields 1991, Atwood 1995, Rosenthal 2004, 2005, 2009) in Québécois and Canadian literature and culture, scholars have not yet explored cultural representations of the Ice Storm of 1998. As more disasters are likely to strike in the coming decades, the urgency and frequency of disaster discourses in literature will surely increase. Florian Freitag explains the significance of disaster discourses in expanding the scope of a regional disaster:

> While disasters themselves may be intense, yet short-lived and local, then, discourses and narratives about disasters extend well beyond the geographical and temporal frames of the events at hand. They provide broad analyses that draw attention to fundamental shortcomings and systemic flaws in society, politics, and culture, to the point where the 'naturalness' of natural disasters is seriously questioned. Disaster discourses thus constitute powerful discourse of social, political, and cultural critique:

> addressing questions of accountability and responsibility, but also seeking to draw lessons from the events in the interest of preventability, they seek to determine what–if anything–happens in the aftermath of a disaster. (Freitag 2015, 129)

Future research should contribute to current scholarly reflections on the relationship between disasters and cultural representations of climate from interdisciplinary perspectives in the fields of literary and cultural studies, ecocriticism, environmental justice, and environmental humanities. The results of the present study show that fiction can be used as a means of healing from both collective and individual trauma. Further pathways for future research should explore this relationship by studying how climate change and disasters influence cultural representations of nordicity, and to determine what−if any−changes have been made to policy as a result of disasters such as the Ice Storm of 1998.

In addition to investigating Montreal fiction, future research could expand to consider literary texts from the entire cross-border region affected by the Ice Storm, as well as investigating and comparing cultural representations of other winter disasters in the entire circumpolar world. Referring to a disaster of heat, rather than cold, could be especially helpful for complicating questions of nordicity, such as Eric Klinenberg's *Heat Wave* (2002), a sociological study of a heat wave in Chicago that covers many of the same issues as those experienced during the Ice Storm, since the dangers of failed temperature control are quite similar and affect similar populations.

Continued explorations into the link between seasonal nordicity and literature will contribute to vast, ongoing debates about the relationship between cultural studies and science, between climate change and representations of climate. Such research will advance research on collective trauma, rehabilitation, and its outworking in fiction (Saul 2014 and Whitehead 2004), disaster research (Nicolet 1999, Huet 2012), and environmental justice. Disaster research often focuses on warm-weather disasters in more southern regions (hurricanes, tornadoes, heat waves); I suggest bringing the "idea of North" and nordicity to bear on these important issues and paradigms.

7.4 Concluding Thoughts

In this study I have brought together the North and the city, two major pathways of scholarly research in Canadian literature in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. While most scholars of English Canadian literature have maintained a binary opposition between the

two, I have addressed this gap in the literature, uniting them by adopting a Québécois mode of thinking about the North as not being somewhere far away, out there, distant from urban environments, but being all around us, right here, even in the center of urban Canadian life and cultural productions. This study, I believe, lays a foundation for other scholars to continue the work of investigating the relationship between nordicity and the urban in both anglophone and francophone literature from Montreal and other Canadian cities. This is the cusp of exciting new research in the field of cultural representations of climate change.

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